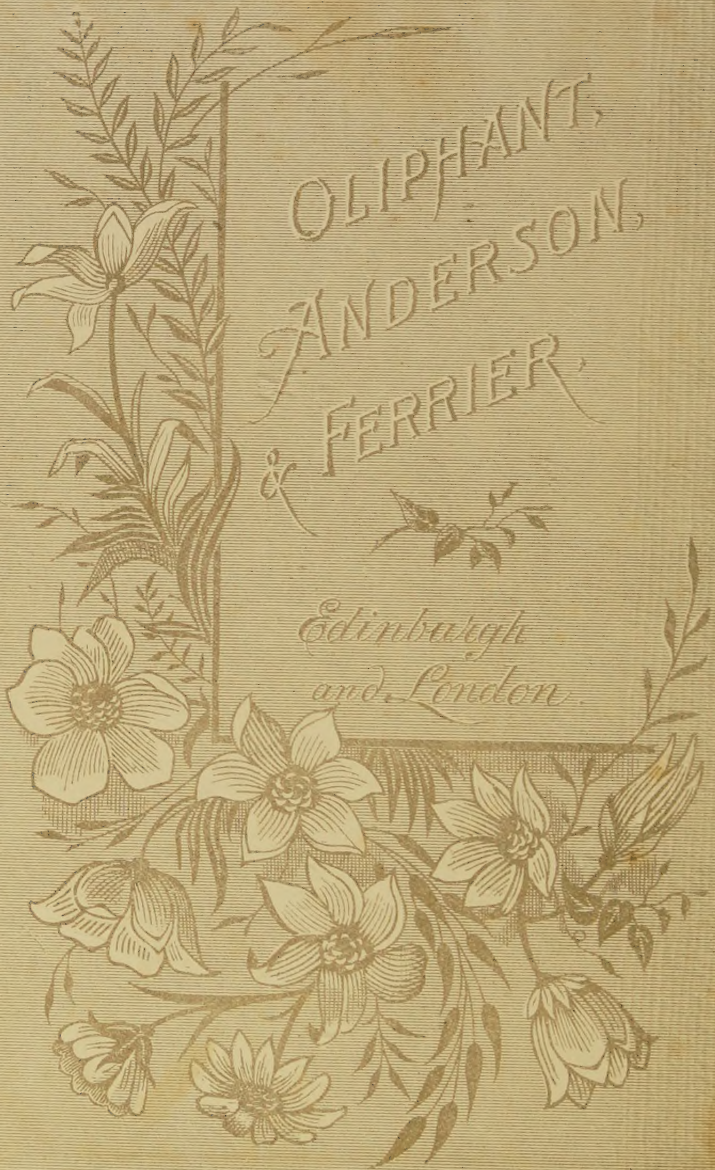
BITS FROM BLINKBONNY

By

John Strathesk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E.TS FROM BLINKBONNY

"BELL, GET EVERYTHING READY AS SOON AS YOU CAN."—*Page* 161.

BITS FROM BLINKBONNY

OR

BELL O' THE MANSE

A TALE OF SCOTTISH VILLAGE LIFE BETWEEN 1841 AND 1851

BY

JOHN STRATHESK

AUTHOR OF "MORE BITS FROM BLINKBONNY," "ANDREW GILLON," "THE 'COME AND GO' FAMILY TEXT BOOK," ETC. ETC.

New and Revised Edition

EDINBURGH & LONDON
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BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

THE MANSE AND ITS INMATES.

"But how the subject theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon."—*Burns.*

AN eminent artist, a member of the Royal Scottish Academy (the late E. T. Crawford, R.S.A.), was showing me some of his sketches from nature, many of them bearing traces of repeated handling. His face brightened when a well-thumbed favourite was lighted on among the promiscuous contents of the old portfolio. With his eye fixed on the sketch, and his hand moving as if either the pencil or the brush were in it, he told with animation where he made this sketch, or took that "bit."

"Ah!" said he, "painting is a difficult, a very difficult thing; in fact, it is just made up of '*bits*'—just bits. A something takes your eye,—a nook, a clump of trees, often a single tree, a boulder, or rocks (grand effects of light and shade on rocks)—ay, even the shape or tinge of a cloud. Well, to work you go, and down with it.—There," said he, as he lifted what seemed a mere scrawl on a half-sheet of old note-paper, "that was taken at the Bank door. I was struck with the effect of sunlight on water falling over a barrel a man was filling in the river, and thought it would

make a nice picture. I got this bit of paper from the banker, took off my hat, laid the paper on it, sketched it off in—oh! less than five minutes, and put it on canvas next day. There's another. I did that on the leaf of my fishing pocket-book at Makumrich, near old Gilston Castle. Now there," said he, taking up a rough-looking, unfinished sea-scene in oil, "this has been a very useful bit. When sketching North Berwick Harbour, all at once I was struck with an effect of light and shade on the sea. I was able to hit it exactly." As he said this, he moved his head from side to side and scanned the picture, saying, "That bit has been of great use to me, although I never made a finished picture of it. The 'effect,' the gleam, the tone are as nearly perfect as possible. Ah," continued he, laying down the sketch, and turning to his easel, on which lay a snow scene,—an old thatched cottage, in my opinion quite finished,—"now there's lots of bits to work up in that picture." And sometimes shaking his brush, and sometimes whirling it in a very small circle close to the picture, but never touching it, he said, "There—and there—and perhaps there. Ah! nobody would believe what a labour it is to make a good picture, with all the *bits* and *bits!*"

I am but an aspirant in literature, and will not presume to compare myself with the veteran artist, or think that I can arrange my bits of village gossip and incident with the artistic skill which earned for him the order of merit he so honourably won and so worthily wore, but I confess to a desire to present some sketches of the everyday social life of Blinkbonny in such a form as to give my readers an idea of its lights and shadows.

Blinkbonny is more of a village than a town, although it is generally spoken of by the outside world as a town, from having its small weekly market and occasional fairs. It lies about thirty miles inland from Edinburgh, and is the centre of a good agricultural district, with a background of moorland and hills. My father was a merchant in it,—a very general merchant, as he dealt in grain, wool, seeds, groceries, cloth, hardware, and various other commodities. This may seem a strange mixture in these days of the division of labour and subdivision of trades, but such

dealers were not uncommon fifty years ago, and they were frequently men of considerable capital and influence. My elder and only brother was a partner with my father in the business. Having early expressed a desire to be a minister, I was sent to Edinburgh to study for the Church, and had completed my fourth session at college, when the death of my brother rendered it necessary that I should do all in my power to supply his place.

When I had been a few months at home, my father, whose health had been failing for some years, became a confirmed invalid. My brother's death not only affected his spirits, but injured his health, and within little more than a year after this heavy trial, the old man was laid beside his wife and eldest son in the churchyard of Blinkbonny. My sisters, all of them older than myself, were married, excepting Maggie; about a year after my father's death Maggie became Mrs. M'Lauchlan, and I was left sole tenant of "Bachelor Hall." The demands of business kept me so fully employed that I had no time to feel lonely; and, while I joined occasionally in the socialities of the district, I did not seriously think of getting married until called upon to act as bridegroom's man to my school-fellow and college companion, John M'Nab, now the Reverend John M'Nab. He married Mary Stewart of Greenknowe, the daughter of a small proprietor on the outskirts of our village. Her sister Agnes was bridesmaid, and she and I were necessarily brought a good deal into one another's society. We had often met before, and I liked her in a general way, but at her sister's marriage I saw much in her first to admire, and very soon to love. There was something—I cannot describe it by any other word than just "something"—that fairly possessed me. For days afterwards she was in my head, in my dreams, in my heart. I will not describe our courtship; it was neither long nor romantic. I wooed and won her, got Mrs. Stewart's consent, and on New Year's Day 1841 we fixed that the marriage should take place in the last week of January.

Mrs. Stewart felt the cold weather severely, and could not venture to call at the manse to request our worthy

parish minister, Mr. Barrie, to perform the ceremony. Agnes could not muster courage to go in her stead,—she even felt too shy to write him on the subject; so, although not according to the strict rules of etiquette, I undertook to call for Mr. Barrie next day, and arrange the matter.

The manse stood on a piece of slightly rising ground, about a quarter of a mile south-west of the village. The situation was a pleasant one. It commanded on three sides extensive views of a well-cultivated country, backed by high and picturesque hills; the village bounded the view on the north-east. Near the manse stood the neat church, surrounded by the churchyard. There were also a park of about four acres, a garden covering nearly an acre, and some outhouses, the whole enclosed by a compact wall.

I had been on intimate terms with all the inmates of the manse, from Bell, the only and worthy servant, upwards; but my errand made me feel confused, and instead of the usual offhand remark to Bell, varying from, "Weel, Bell, hoo's a' wi' ye?" to comments on the weather or crops, as suited the season, I bluntly asked if Mr. Barrie was engaged. There was a flavour of tartness in Bell's manner as she replied, "Mr. Barrie's aye thrang, but he's aye ready to see onybody that wants him partic'larly. I'll speir at *him* if he's engaged," and disappeared. Mr. Barrie himself came to the door, received me with more than usual heartiness, put a special emphasis on *happy* in wishing me "a happy New Year," gave my hand a full-of-meaning squeeze, and, with a smile on his face, said, "Come in, Mr. Martin, come in." He had not called me "Mr." before, only plain Robert; and from the blithe way in which he showed me into the "study," I saw that he knew my position, if not my errand.

Our conversation was at first general, and on my side jerky. I did not follow up intelligently the subjects he introduced, but was either silent or rambling on quite irrelevant topics. He made a long pause, doubtless to induce me to lead, as he evidently saw I was not disposed to follow. That not uncommon weakness of Scotchmen, viz. trying to conceal strong emotions even when they

feel keenly, was working in me. I was heart-glad at the prospect of my marriage, as well I might; but wishing to appear cool, and as if merely beginning another subject, I said in a conversational way, "I was once thinking of getting married." Scarcely had I finished the sentence, when Bell announced that Sir John M'Lelland wished to speak to Mr. Barrie when he was disengaged. Knowing Sir John to be the largest landowner in the parish, as well as the patron of the church, and that he took an active part in a church extension scheme in which Mr. Barrie was deeply interested, I at once left the "study," stating that I would call to-morrow night, and went to Greenknowe, where I was bantered by both ladies, but especially by Mrs. Stewart, when I told about "once thinking of getting married."

Laying the emphasis first on the *once*, then on the *thinking*, then on both, she said, "Is that all the length you are? You should think *twice*—second thoughts are often best. Agnes, if you had either called or written, as I wished, we could have had the invitations out to-day; perhaps Robert will take the second thought to-night, and until *he* quite makes up his mind we must wait with patience."

Next night found me at the manse door, which Bell "answered." I was very frank, but she had barely digested last night's slight, and, before I had finished my salutation, she said drily, "It'll be the minister ye want the nicht again?" and showed me into the study. Mr. Barrie, after expressing regret at the sudden breaking up of our last night's interview, asked me if the day had been fixed. I replied that we would prefer the last Tuesday of January, if that date suited him. He at once said, "I will make it suit me." After noting it in a memorandum book, he proceeded, although I had not mentioned the name of my future wife, to speak very nicely of the good folks at Greenknowe; of the late Mr. Stewart, who had been one of his elders, and from whom, in the earlier years of his ministry, he had received much useful counsel; of Mrs. Stewart's almost motherly kindness ever since he came to the parish; of his great esteem for Miss Stewart (my Agnes),

and of her devotion to her father, especially in his last long illness. He also spoke of my late father and brother as excellent, very excellent men, said some things about myself which I will not repeat, and taking me by the hand, said, "Humanly speaking, your marriage promises to be in every respect a happy event for all concerned. May God bless you both, and make you blessings to each other, to all your circle, to the church, and to the world."

I thanked him warmly, adding that I might trouble him and possibly Mrs. Barrie for advice on some matters; and was proceeding to bid him good-night, when he said, "Robert, this is an occasion, I may say a great occasion, and you must take an egg with us. I told Mrs. Barrie last night that you were 'once thinking of getting married.' She will be delighted to learn that your second thought has got the length of fixing the day. I am in the habit of giving all bridegrooms a few quiet hints, but wish you to have a chat with both of us. You will find Mrs. Barrie's counsel sound and practical, so we'll join her in the parlour;" and suiting the action to the word, he lifted the lamp, and asking me to follow him, made for the snug parlour, where he announced me as "a subject of *compound* interest now, not *simple* as before."

Mrs. Barrie was darning a stocking as I entered, which she laid on the table, and shaking my hand with great heartiness, said, "I need hardly wish *you* a happy new year, Mr. Martin. You are as sure as any one can be sure of happiness in this world. I hope you consider yourself a *very* lucky man?"

I made as nice a reply as I could. Mrs. Barrie repeated her husband's "You must take an egg with us;" and, laying the half-darned stocking in her work-basket, she looked into a cradle that stood in the cosiest corner of the room, and seeing that all was right there, said, "I must see that the other little folks are *happit* before I sit down," and left the room. But, before I tell of the evening's quiet enjoyment in the manse parlour, I will give my readers some information about the inmates of the manse itself.

Mr. Barrie was ordained minister of Blinkbonny in 1830, and early in 1831 he brought his young wife, till then Mary

Gordon, home to the manse. He was a son of the manse, —a son of the minimum stipend; when half through his preparatory studies he became a son of the Widows' Fund. Mrs. Barrie's parents had been in a very comfortable worldly position for the first sixteen years of her life, but through circumstances over which they had no control, and to which she never referred, their means had been greatly reduced. Her father died when she was eighteen years of age; her mother survived her father about four years. She was thus an orphan at twenty-two. When twenty-five years of age she was married, Mr. Barrie being her senior by fully one year; she brought to the manse "a good providing," but little money or "tocher," as a bride's marriage portion is called in Scotland. The income of the minister of Blinkbonny, or, to use the church phrase, the "stipend," was paid partly in money and partly in grain, and averaged about £160 yearly. The furnishing of the manse and the minister's library had required and received careful consideration. Even the providing of live stock for the park, to commence with, involved an outlay that in the circumstances was considerable; but by Bell's indefatigable industry and management, the cow, the hens, the garden, and even the pig, became such important sources of supply in the household economy, that any description of the inmates of the manse would be utterly incomplete which did not make honourable mention of worthy Bell.

Bell had come with Mrs. Barrie as her first servant, and had grown up as, if not into, a part of the family. She was fully middle height, muscular, not stout but well-conditioned, had a good complexion, a "weel-faured" face, keen, deep-set, dark eyes; and altogether a comely woman. I believe her full name was Isabella Cameron, but she was only known as Bell, occasionally Mrs. Barrie's Bell; so much so that when a letter came to the manse, addressed "Miss Cameron," Mr. and Mrs. Barrie laid it aside, expecting some stranger would call for it, and were instructing Bell to return it to the post office in the evening, should no Miss Cameron cast up, when Bell said, "My name's Cameron; it'll maybe be for me." It was, much to Mrs. Barrie's embarrassment, and told of the death of Bell's aunt. Bell had few relations,

—none that seemed to care for her, and consequently none with whom she kept up correspondence.

She was a year older than Mrs. Barrie. Her first "place" had been in a small farmhouse, where the manners were very primitive, and the work was very constant. One of her questions shortly after coming to the manse was, "Does Mr. Barrie aye take his dinner with his coat on?" a thing she had not seen before. Mrs. Barrie had a little difficulty in getting her to comprehend the *proprieties*, but none in getting her to do exactly as she was told. Bell felt nothing a bother, took pleasantly any explanation given as to her mistakes, laughed at them when pointed out, and with a cheerful "I'll mind that," thanked Mrs. Barrie. It took her some time to learn the distinctive tones of the bells, the parlour, dining-room, front door, etc.; and for the first week or two, when a bell was rung, she ran to the nearest room and tried it, then to another, sometimes to the disturbance of the folks inside; but she soon came to know which was which.

It was a sight to see Bell unbuckle her gown,—which when at work she gathered round her, and fastened in some wonderfully *fast-loose* way,—shake herself, and stalk off in response, especially to the front door, to any ring that seemed peremptory.

Sir John M'Lelland was making his first call after the marriage. He handed Bell his card, politely asking if Mr. and Mrs. Barrie were at home. Bell looked at the card, but it was in German text, and therefore unintelligible; then at Sir John, but that did not help her; she next turned upon her heel,—the swiftest, cleverest motion of the kind that could be imagined,—walked briskly to Mrs. Barrie, and said, "There's a man at the door, a weel-put-on man, and he asked for you, an' he gied me a ticket, an' he's there yet."

Mrs. Barrie soon put such mistakes right. She found Bell an apt scholar, scrupulously clean, sterlingly honest, and always busy, though not fussy. At first Bell was most at home among the hens, cows, pigs, and in the garden, but she soon became well up in all household work. Even the addition of the children one by one never seemed to tax Bell's powers heavily. The first two, James and Mary,

were healthy, and in Bell's homely phrase, "never looked behind them;" but the third, "Wee Nellie," had been from her birth "a feeble, delicate, little thing." When she was about three years old, scarlet fever attacked the children, beginning with Lewis, the baby. His was a mild case; so were those of James and Mary, but Nellie's was a severe one. Her pulse ran very high, her little body was covered with the bright scarlet "*rash*," her throat sorely affected, her breathing laboured, and requiring more effort than the weak constitution could spare. Mrs. Barrie and Bell were unwearied in their efforts to relieve the poor sufferer, and gently was she passed from knee to knee in her restless moods, gently was she laid down again, and coaxed, and humoured, and waited on, with unspeakably tender care.

Between Bell and Nellie there had been a special intimacy. She called herself "Bell's bairn;" and as her age and health did not admit of her joining the other children at play, she was seldom out of the kitchen, except when Bell wrapped her cosily in a plaid, and carried her about the parks or garden, where Bell diverted herself quite as much as the "wee whitefaced girlie," by humouring her childish whims, and joining in, if not provoking, her wondering interest. And ever and anon, as Nellie expressed delight at what Bell said, or did, or pulled, or showed, Bell would press her warmly to her breast, and croon over words of endearment about her "wee croodlin' doo," "her ain darling Nellie," "she was Bell's bairn," and tell her that when she was big she would help Bell to milk "Daisy," and feed the hens. The cosiest corner in the kitchen was Nellie's "housie." There she would play for hours, sometimes sitting on her little stool, and chatting with Bell "like an auld body;" sometimes fondling her black-and-white kitten Tibby; sometimes putting to sleep her favourite doll "Black Tam," a time-stained and sorely battered image of an old negro, who, although he had neither arms nor legs, still retained on his head, which had been gouged out to imitate the woolly hair of the African, crescent-shaped indents of his original blackness, while his lips were flecked with streaks of their primitive crimson; sometimes playing with broken bits of china,

drawing Bell's attention to those with gold on them as "Nellie's pennies." Not infrequently did Bell take the wee lassie on her kindly lap, press her to her motherly bosom, and sing, and sigh as she sang, her favourite if not only song of the "Bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond."

It need hardly be recorded that Bell's agony at Nellie's illness was only equalled by that of Mrs. Barrie,—possibly by that of Mr. Barrie, but only possibly. She had been struck with the hectic flush which glowed on Nellie's face, and saw that the fever was sore on her; but she hoped against hope, until on the seventh day of the illness a spasmodic movement of the weak body, and a hazy gleam of the weary eye, revealed to Bell that Nellie's recovery was hopeless. The thought of losing her came so suddenly on Bell, that she nearly broke down in the room; but, restraining herself, as her eye rested on Mrs. Barrie's calm motherly face, intent on anticipating and ministering to the wants of the sufferer, Bell whispered that she would "see if the bairns were all right, and be back immediately," and left the room. She walked noiselessly through the lobby, at the darkest corner of it gave two or three great "gulps," and uttered a bitter "Oh! dear, dear." This was what nature demanded; this at least, more if she could have got it; but the little snatch relieved her pent-up heart, and braced her for further service. After seeing that the other children were right, she glided into the sick-room, from which Mr. Barrie, with a remark or rather a sigh about "too many breaths," emerged as she entered; took the fever-tossed child gently out of Mrs. Barrie's weary arms, and did her best to relieve the difficulty of breathing, so harassing to the watchers and so sore on the patient. Gradually the fitful struggles became less violent; Nellie got quieter, softer, powerless. She half opened her eyes, then closed them slowly, and said in a faint voice, with a long *eerie* tone, "Bell." Bell, half choking with grief, bent over her and kept saying, "Yes, ye're Bell's bairn, ye're Bell's ain bairn;" but observing the girlie's weary, weary face and increasing weakness, she looked wistfully at the invalid, then sympathisingly at Mrs. Barrie, and, rising

softly, laid the wee lamb on Mrs. Barrie's lap, slipped noiselessly to Mr. Barrie's study, and opening the door very slightly, said, "Please, sir, come ben, or the angels will be before you!" She got another gulp as she followed him to the sick-room, and this helped her greatly. The little darling recognised "papa,"—smiled as she lisped his name, —smiled if possible more sweetly as she heard her mother's voice, in quivering accents, saying, "My ain wee wee Nellie!" and sighed audibly, "Mamma's wee wee"— Her quivering eyelids then closed over her weary eyes, and in the act of raising her tiny hand to her throat, it fell powerless, and Wee Nellie was Wee Nellie no more, or rather, as Bell said, Wee Nellie for ever.

Her delicate health and consequent helplessness, as also her gentleness, had endeared her to Mr. Barrie. When all was over, he muttered, "She was a pleasant child, lovely and beautiful in her life;" and added in a firmer voice, "It is well with the child, it is well." Bell lifted the little body from its mother's lap, and laid it gently on the bed. Her tears were streaming, but she had got the first bitter pang over, and putting her arm on, or rather round, Mrs. Barrie's shoulder, she said, "Come away, mem, for a little; I'll put all right." Mrs. Barrie obeyed mechanically, and was persuaded by Bell to lie down in bed. There wearied nature asserted her prerogative, and she slept soundly for a considerable time. When she returned to the sick-room, all traces of illness, in the shape of couches, baths, phials, and confusion, were away; the old crumb-cloth which had been put down to preserve the carpet was exchanged for a clean linen drugget; the fire was out, the fire-place filled with fir-tops; the window was open, and the blind drawn down; here and there about the room were little muslin bags filled with lavender seed. On the mantelpiece, which, when she left, was covered with tumblers, and cans, and glasses of medical stuff, overlapped with paper, or having spoons in them to the hazard of their balance, stood three tumblers filled with bunches of lavender; and on the bed lay all that remained of Nellie, "dressed and laid out," her little body making all the more appearance that the snow-white bedcover was tightly laid over it. On her face lay a

muslin handkerchief, kept down by a bag of lavender on either side.

As Mrs. Barrie approached the bed, Bell walked to the other side of it, and slowly folded down the face-cloth. All traces of suffering and weariness had vanished; the face was that of a child smiling in sleep.

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "she's beautiful" (she had never said that before of her or of any of her children), "beautiful—and she's home. Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Bell tried to speak. She got the length of faltering out, "For ever with the Lord," when Mrs. Barrie stooped down to kiss her "lost lamb." Bell rather quickly folded the face-cloth over the mouth, saying, "On the cheek or the broo, mem, no' on the mooth." Although Mrs. Barrie's frame shook as her lips touched the cold brow, she pressed them on it lingeringly, and as she raised herself she said, "I will go to her, she cannot return to me." Then, looking round the room, she said, "Bell, O Bell! I can never repay, and I will *never* forget, your kindness at this time." She would have said more, but Bell broke down, and Mrs. Barrie broke down, and both were considerably better when the pent-up flood of sorrow found relief.

In the churchyard of Blinkbonny stands a little marble slab, only a few inches above the ground, bearing the following inscription :—

HELEN BARRIE

DIED 18TH MAY 1838, AGED 3 YEARS.

WITH CHRIST . . . FAR BETTER.

The spot had no more constant visitor than Bell. The flowers that in their season grew round it were planted by her hand, and tended by her with constant care; the only difference being that in weeding or trimming *it* there was not the quick, bustling energy she exercised in the garden, but a reverent slowness unusual for her. She never put her foot on the sod under which Nellie lay; and, although during the first few visits she sighed mournfully as she read

the inscription (and she read it aloud to herself every visit), it was not long before her face lightened as she uttered the last two words, and would add in a cheerful confirmatory tone, as if Nellie herself had repeated the epitaph, "Yes, Nellie; yes, Bell's bairn; far better; far, far better."

"A butterfly bask'd on a baby's grave,
Where a lily had chanced to grow;
'Why art thou here with thy gaudy dye,
When she of the blue and sparkling eye
Must sleep in the churchyard low?'

Then it lightly soar'd through the sunny air,
And spoke from its shining track:
'I was a worm till I won my wings,
And she whom thou mourn'st, like a seraph sings;
Wouldst thou call the blessed one back?'"

Mrs. Sigourney.

CHAPTER II.

A QUIET EVENING AT THE MANSE.

"Thrift made them easy for the coming day,
Religion took the fear of death away;
A cheerful spirit still ensured content,
And love smiled round them wheresoe'er they went."
Crabbe.

I NEED hardly tell that between Mrs. Barrie and Bell the relationship of mistress and servant was more than cordial, more than intimate,—I can find no better word to express it than perfect. To say that Bell knew her place is a term much too bald; she filled it, fulfilled it, *full*-filled it. She was devoted to the family's interest; her heart and mind were in her work; she had a clear head, a strong arm, a blithe happy manner, and an uncommonly large stock of common sense.

Bell had a ready "knack" of dividing the articles under her care, by a *sliding* scale of her own, so as to put all to the best use: she laid aside some for the dining-room on "company" days, and even at a sudden call was seldom found unprepared; some for the parlour, to suit old and young (for there was no formal nursery in the manse,—Bell's room, "off" the kitchen, was best entitled to the name, although competing claims might have been put forward by the kitchen itself, the parlour, and even the study); some for the kitchen, but *that* had not a high place in her scale; a good deal for the poor,—plain, handy, given in good time and with discernment. Of one thing she was very careful, that if any food seemed likely to spoil, it was given away *before* it went wrong; if any clothing, it was given clean, and, although often well patched, it was fit for

immediate use. There was a corner in the kitchen pantry with a stock of comforts, and even luxuries, for cases of sickness, old age, or special need. The dumb animals were studied with thoughtful care, and repaid it well. Everything that could be used was used regularly and methodically.

Bell's dress varied with her work. In the morning she "sorted" the live stock, clad in what an artist would have called a grotesque or picturesque costume, according to the season. In winter her upper garment was an old overcoat of Mr. Barrie's—a "Spencer;" in summer it was a loose-fitting jacket of striped cotton, lilac and white; her linsey-woolsey petticoat was of the right length for such work, and all were shaken, brushed, or beaten daily. She put on her cotton "morning wrapper," of blue with small white spots, just before she "set" the breakfast, and got "redd up" for the day in time to serve dinner. While she had her set times for regular work, she "turned her hand" smartly to anything more pressing, and observed no "Factory Act" restrictions as to her hours of labour. Very early in the morning the clank of Bell's "pattens"[1] was heard as she attended to the home farm, and till far on in the evening she was working away anxiously and cheerfully. Her rest was a change of work on week-days. On the Sabbath afternoon she took what seemed likest a rest, viz. a walk round the whole premises, leisurely, observant, inquisitive, noticing everything, and mentally noting a good deal for next week's attention; varied by an occasional "saunter"

[1] Pattens were a primitive form of what are now known as overshoes, although "undershoe" defines them more correctly. The upper part was wood,—not unlike the frame of an oval horse-brush; it was put on by pushing the foot firmly into overstraps made of leather or "girth cloth," in the same way as a horse-brush is fixed on a groom's hand. The under part was an oval-shaped ring of thin iron, measuring about six inches long, four inches broad, and one inch deep. There being no fastening at the back, the heel of the wearer's shoe made a "slip-shod" noise on the wooden sole, which, added to the clanking of the iron soles, especially on pavement or causeway, produced a double-beat "clatterin' clatter." To the inexperienced they were as difficult to walk with as skates; kept the foot about two inches from the ground, and were slipped off by merely withdrawing the foot. They not only kept the feet dry, but a "clean hoose."

through the gardens of her neighbours for purposes of observation, comparison, insight, or exchange.

Bell's respect for Mr. and Mrs. Barrie was profound: they were the handsomest couple in the parish; indeed many parishes might have been gone through before a more comely, gentle, ladylike person than Mrs. Barrie could be met with. Bell said, "They were, if that was possible, better than they were bonnie." When Mrs. Barrie told her, as she often did, to take things more leisurely, Bell would reply, "I like to work, mem, I like it; I canna be idle." Mrs. Barrie's remonstrances were firmer on extra occasions, such as a "heavy washing," but Bell's answer was, "It was naething, naething at a'; and didna we get a grand day for drying the claes?"—or at the "Spring cleanin'," when her answer was, "It's best to get a' the confusion past and by wi't. It was a nice thing a fresh, clean hoose;—'deed, mem, it astonishes me to see hoo much cleanin' every place needs, although it's no' very bad like before you begin."

I may be dwelling too long on Bell, and it is not at all unlikely that she may become the heroine of my story, or rather the central figure round which the "bits" are grouped. If so, I could not wish a better, although Bell herself had no idea that she was such a good servant, or that she did more than her bare duty; she oftener felt she had not done as well as she wished. She was too sensible and busy a woman to think much about herself; and should she read these "Bits," would be the first to say "I wish I had done better,—he hasna tell'd my fau'ts." Worthy, kindly, honest Bell!

Mrs. Barrie's housekeeping was the admiration, to many it was the miracle, of the parish and district. She was a good manager, and with such a helpmate as Bell, made her income do wonders. To the poor, the manse was always open for judicious help; the hospitality of the dining-room and parlour was substantial and becoming. This was all the more astonishing from the fact that Mrs. Barrie was "such a delightful creature," "such a charming person," "quite a lady," "a model minister's wife," "so accomplished," "so amiable," "so frank," "so nice," "so attractive" (these are actual epithets used by her friends),

that the number of visitors, many of whom were easily persuaded to become guests, was larger than desirable, and the consequent calls on larder and pantry were heavy. This was a subject of frequent remark among those who enjoyed the hospitality of the manse, all wondering how *ever* she could manage, and many "beseeching" Mrs. Barrie not to trouble herself about *them*, as they only wished a quiet chat, although the length of many of their visits made them more like visitations; Mrs. Black and Mrs. White suggesting that Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown might be more considerate, whilst Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown were surprised at the audacious manner in which Mrs. Black and Mrs. White thrust themselves on Mrs. Barrie. Really it was difficult to withstand the attractions of the manse, and Mr. and Mrs. Barrie, particularly Mrs. Barrie, was made a social martyr because she was so good, and kind, and true.

It never occurred to Mrs. Barrie that her good-nature and good housekeeping were inconsiderately drawn upon by many who should have known better. She liked to see, and contribute to, the enjoyment of others, preferred being active to being passive in this matter, and was "given to hospitality" from the genuine sweetness of her nature. While the sigh of weariness often escaped her lips at the close of some of the nice "sociables," which had been prolonged so as to interfere with domestic and other duties, she never murmured; although she and Bell had often to encroach upon the hours of rest or sleep to keep everything forward, and as they would like it.

Mr. Barrie's broadcloth was invariably fresh-looking, and his linen faultless. Mrs. Barrie was at all times becomingly dressed, and in the afternoons quite "the lady, aye sae genty." The boys and girls were always comfortably and neatly clad, specially so on Sabbath; and theirs was a happy home.

Before I began to describe the inmates of the manse, I mentioned that Mrs. Barrie said, on leaving the parlour, she was going to see if the "bairns were happit." She seldom spoke Scotch, but when she did, it was with quaint emphasis and special sweetness. There was no real need for Mrs. Barrie having any anxiety on this subject of

"happing," as Bell was always on the alert; but Mrs. Barrie's motherly heart could not rest until she had seen, and kissed in their beds, her "wee croodlin' doos." She went first to see Bell about supper; then to Bell's room, where Mary and Flora were fast asleep; then to her own room, where Lewis was sleeping soundly, but James was wide awake, scheming in his little head how he could get a pair of skates, and wishing that Bell would come up, as her "pattens" seemed the most likely materials to make them of, and he had seen an old pair in the byre. Mrs. Barrie heard his story, and said they would never do; but that Mr. Martin was in the parlour, and she would ask him the price of a pair, if he would sleep like a good boy; then kissing both, and "tucking" them in, she returned to the parlour.

During her absence, Mr. Barrie spoke to me in quite a fatherly way. He knew I had a good business and fair prospects, but, since my father's death, I had bought a small property called Knowe Park, adjoining the village, and that this locked up my spare means to such an extent as to render it a little difficult for me comfortably to carry on business to the extent my father had done. After stating that he thought I was taking a wise step in getting married, he said he found it generally the case, although it sounded like a contradiction, that a married house was more cheaply and much better kept than a bachelor's; and that he was in the custom of drawing the attention of folks who were about to get married to the subject of Life Assurance, or, if working men, to Benefit Societies, and to the necessity of economy and prudence in money matters. "But," added he, "you understand these things better than I do, and I know you will act judeeciously," with a considerable emphasis on the *ee*. When he referred to the various relationships of social life, he closed each section (for his advices unconsciously ran into "heads and particulars," like his sermons), with, "In short, be judeecious;" and so clearly did he illustrate the inseparable connection between wisdom and success or happiness in everything he spoke of, that his advice seemed then, and seems yet, summed up in, "Be judeecious." He will excuse me for telling here, that in the parish he was not infrequently spoken of as "Judeecious;" and after the lapse

of fully forty years, he is still occasionally styled, "Worthy old Judeecious," by some elderly friends, when recalling the sunny memories of former days, although in general conversation he is now spoken of as Dr. Barrie.

He related with considerable glee a saying of an old minister, who, in speaking of money matters, used to maintain that there were only three ways in which a minister could make money—patrimony, matrimony, or parsimony. He also told the story, which is long ago threadbare, of an old merchant, who, when asked why his son had not done so well in business as he, replied, "That is easily explained: we old folks began with a little house and a plain table, with porridge and a herring, and got up to tea and a 'chuckie' [chicken]; but the young folks began with a braw house, and tea and chuckies, and silks, and never buckled up their sleeves to work." When Mrs. Barrie joined us, supper was already on the table. After glancing into the cradle, to see if all was right with "Gordie," or Gordon Lennox, as his full name was, she said, "Come away, gentlemen," and seating herself at the head of the table, did the honours in a graceful and homely way.

Bell had brought in the little black kettle, and it kept singing by the fire. When the simple meal was over, Mr. Barrie and I made a "tumbler" of toddy each, a rare thing for him, but he said it was "New Year time," and an "occasion;" and my health was drunk, and that of Agnes, in which Mrs. Barrie joined, a *very* rare thing for her. Mr. Barrie had just said, "Now, my dear, you must give Mr. Martin the benefit of a little of your experience," when the door-handle was slowly turned, evidently by a less firm hand than Bell's, and a little head and part of a little white night-gown, appeared at the half-opened door, while a voice timidly uttered "Mamma," followed by Bell's voice, which, with a mixture of astonishment and anxiety in its tone, was heard saying, "James—here—at this time o' nicht! whatever's the matter wi' ye, laddie?" All in the room said, "James!" but before Mrs. Barrie had time to apologise (which she was proceeding to do to James for forgetting the skates, although the strict bargain was that she would speak to me if he *slept* like a good boy), he threw light on

the interruption, greatly to Bell's relief, by saying, "Mamma, have you spoken to Mr. Martin about the skates?"

James's single sentence told the whole story better than any other words could have done, and I told him to come to see me to-morrow, and I would find him a pair. Mr. Barrie's "Oh, Mr. Martin, you—" and Mrs. Barrie's "My dear boy, you must—" and Bell's "Skates! you'll break your legs, or drown—" were all interrupted, and all three silenced by James's very pronounced "Oh, thank you, Mr. Martin, thank you very much."

"Good-night, James," had come from all at the table, and Bell had the boy in hand to lead him away, and the door was all but closed, when sounds of a struggle were heard going on between James and Bell, and he reappeared, this time at full length, with one arm distended towards the lobby, his feet planted firmly, his body inclined forwards, as if in resistance to an outward pull, and his other arm clutching the upper bead of the parlour dado.

"Oh, Mr. Martin, please, sir, when will I come to-morrow?" said the boy eagerly.

"Nine o'clock, James, or any time after that."

"Oh, thank you, sir;" and looking at Mrs. Barrie, said, "May I go, mamma?"

"We'll see to-morrow," replied Mrs. Barrie; "do go to bed like a good boy."

This was too indefinite for James. "But please, mamma, may I go?" pleaded the boy earnestly, for Bell was pulling him strongly outwards.

"Yes," replied Mr. Barrie, qualifying his assent by some conditions about not going upon the "Loch," without mamma's permission, which James did not hear. Bell's strength had mastered his, and the door was closed. The two went up-stairs, Bell enlarging on broken legs and drowning, James on trying to learn on the "pattens," and would not cease speaking about them, till Bell threatened to go down and tell me not to let him have them, and had feigned a determined start on that errand, when James said, "Oh, don't go, Bell; I'll be a good boy, and sleep;" which he did.

James being thus pleasantly disposed of, Mrs. Barrie

entered upon her record of experiences, which proved so interesting, that before she had spoken long, I so far forgot myself as to say, "How I wish Agnes had been here!" Mrs. Barrie caught me at once, and said with a merry smile, "Can you not do with us for an hour? or rather, why did you not bring her with you?"—then went on with her useful hints and good advice, illustrating these by incidents that had occurred in her household.

A "for instance," or "I remember on one occasion," was followed by an account of a sudden call on her larder,—or a valuable dress torn, or soiled, or spoiled, —or a breakage,—or an unexpectedly heavy tradesman's account,—or something that was much needed, and apparently beyond her power and purse, yet eventually procured by ingenuity and patience,—or her little plans to make Mr. Barrie's coat into a suit for James and possibly a vest for Lewie. And as her family increased, the scheming, and shaping, and sewing, and turning of garments to keep all "cosy," were prettily told, and proved, if I may use such a term, romantic in their very simplicity. I cannot forget the pathos with which she told of a serious and alarming illness caught by Mr. Barrie the week after Nellie's death, at a funeral in a distant part of the parish; but doubtless aggravated by the disturbed state of his mind, and the disorganised condition of his frame. For, good man as he was, and perfectly resigned to God's will, he felt keenly the blank in the home,—for "a little chair was empty there;" and although it could not be said that he murmured, I know he greatly missed "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still."

"He was very ill," said Mrs. Barrie; "alarmingly ill,—so ill that I suggested to Dr. Stevenson, or rather it struck the doctor and myself at the same moment, that it would be desirable to call in an Edinburgh consulting physician. I confess the fee was a serious consideration, as I knew it would prevent my getting the new wincey dresses for myself and the girls that I had been saving up for; although this only floated through my mind in its excited state, and required no effort to cast off. The professor came, and went into the case minutely. Never can I forget the kindly way

in which he told me that our family doctor had treated the case exactly as he himself would have done,—that Mr. Barrie was a splendid patient, self-possessed, scrupulously obedient to the doctor's orders, a model of passive subjection to the minutiæ of medical requirements; and that his good constitution, which had been conserved by his regular and correct life, rendered the case a hopeful one, still one requiring every attention and care. He said something about myself in that connection which I will not repeat, but I told him I had a servant worth her weight in gold,—Bell."

"That is beyond doubt," said Mr. Barrie and I simultaneously. Mrs. Barrie went on:

"He also said that he had successfully treated similar cases on a method of his own, and that Mr. Barrie's case was such as to make him most anxious to have it treated with scrupulous attention to the most minute details of this new system,—that he would write these out carefully, be in correspondence with Dr. Stevenson, and come out again if necessary. I asked his fee; he said not to mind at present, and when I pressed him he said he would write me. Before leaving, he wrote out very particular directions and instructions, which Dr. Stevenson more fully explained, so that we were able to carry them out to the letter. Three days after his visit, the carrier brought a small hamper of medicines and cordials from the professor, with full instructions as to their use, and a letter to myself"— here she sobbed. Tears trembled in her eyes as she told the story of the illness, but they trickled down as she spoke of the letter.

Drying her tears, however, she proceeded: "In the letter he expressed his gratitude at having it in his power to minister 'to the necessities of saints,' his delight at having the new method tried so completely, and"—here she halted; then after a moment's pause said, "Well, I am quoting,—and with such nursing. He added that as he promised to refer to the fee, he would be more than repaid by Mr. Barrie's recovery, as it would fortify him in adopting the treatment generally, and announcing it to the profession. Mr. Barrie had meantime got 'the turn.' I snatched a few minutes to reply to the professor's letter. Mine was written with a full heart, but a shaking hand. I fear it was

but a sorry production; but," she added firmly, and with a beaming eye, "the professor's letter lies in my mother's Bible, beside my marriage lines and little Nellie's hair. It is not exactly as he sent it; there are not only crumpled spots where my tears fell, but under his signature I wrote, before putting it among my treasures, 'the Good Samaritan.' Mr. Barrie wonders why I did not rather write 'the Beloved Physician;' that would have done very well, but I like 'the Good Samaritan' better. Now that I think of it, I will get it out to-morrow, and Mr. Barrie can add 'the Beloved Physician' himself."

She did not tell then, but I heard from the "carrier," that the basket in which the cordials were sent was first well washed and bleached by Bell, then filled with the best her hen-roost and dairy and garden could afford, and sent to the physician without any address,—Bell herself having charged the carrier "just to hand it in an' come away,—no' to say where it cam' frae."

Mrs. Barrie did not confine herself merely to matters of thrift and housekeeping she also dwelt upon the higher feelings of our nature, the social sympathies, the ties and joys of home and kindred; but I cannot do justice to the fine taste with which she described or enforced these.

Mr. Barrie occasionally joined in the conversation; but he was interjectional, and impressive, more from his tone, the expression of his countenance, and his slight gestures, than from the words he used. When the soiled dress was spoken of, he said with a smile, "Birniepark,"—referring to an awkward servant having spilt a sauceboat full of gravy on Mrs. Barrie's wedding dress. When "breakage" was mentioned, he said, "Janet,"—recalling an officious, brisk young lady, who, at one of the annual tea meetings of the Sabbath-school teachers in the manse, had seized the tray with great bounce, to *help away* with the tea-things, and had literally succeeded, as in crossing the lobby she stumbled, and every dish was broken. When the physician's letter was referred to, he merely said, "Ebenezer,—Epaphroditus,—Onesiphorus."

Mrs. Barrie finished by giving a few simple rules she had herself tried to carry out: "Never buy anything you do not

need; look twice at a cheap bargain; use the least of everything, lose the least of everything, and make the most of everything; save all you can, use all you can, and be sure to give all you can. So much for housekeeping; but be as careful of your heart as of your purse, and 'be kindly affectioned one towards another, in honour preferring one another.'"

Mr. Barrie summed up with: "In fact, be judeecious. Practise economy, not parsimony; use the world as not abusing it; owe no man anything but to love one another, —a debt that can never be fully discharged. Love begets love."

Glancing at the timepiece, I saw that the hour was later than I imagined, and rose to leave. After thanking Mrs. Barrie for her hearty counsel, I added I hoped she would call at Greenknowe before the marriage, and be as kind to Agnes as she had been to me. I saw by Mrs. Barrie's eye that she had me again.

"I suppose," said she with great glee, "you do not wish me to call for you both after you are married! I quite expected you to invite me; but Agnes will be calling to say good-bye."

"What!" said I; "good-bye? She's not going so far away."

"But she will make a P.P.C. call."

"A what?" for I did not know what P.P.C. meant.

"Ask her; I dare not now trust myself to quote French in full."

I had begun to thank Mr. Barrie, when he said gravely, "Mr. Martin, I greatly desire that there shall be family worship in every house in the parish, and impress this upon all intending young housekeepers; so you will kindly take the service for me to-night." Without waiting for a reply, he moved towards the handle of the bell (it was a little bone barrel at the end of a bit of green cord), saying, "We will call in Bell," when I put my hand on his, and said excitedly, "Mr. Barrie! please excuse me,—pray, don't ask me to-night, please don't!" for the sudden call and circumstances made me quite nervous.

Mrs. Barrie kindly came to my relief by bidding me a

hearty good-night, and saying, "Mr. Martin may have another call to make to-night, my dear."

Mr. Barrie followed me to the lobby, and hoped I would excuse his rather hasty invitation to conduct family worship; he had forgotten the apostolic injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Then, taking me warmly by the hand, he said, "I rejoice with you to-night at the step you are taking; it is not only judeecious, but promises to be a very happy one for yourselves and your circle. But pray remember the '*Nisi Dominus frustra*' of your college days, —'Except the Lord do build the house, they labour in vain that build it.'" There was another firm shaking of hands as we parted, and I heard his voice as I walked off, warning me to go very cautiously along the slippery roads, as I was "some other body's property now."

CHAPTER III.

THE MARRIAGE AND HOME-COMING.

"We're a' noddin',
Nid, nid, noddin',
We're a' noddin'
At our house at hame."

MY stay at the manse had been longer than I expected. When I reached Greenknowe, I had hardly recovered from the scare I had got by the proposal to conduct family worship, and my account of what had passed was a jumble about Bell, and skates, and Good Samaritans. Agnes looked at me anxiously, and said, "Are you well enough? You look excited." I told her what had excited me, at which she first laughed, then looked thoughtful, then sympathetic, and said, "You're tired, and it is late; come over to-morrow night, if you can;" and after a pause she added, "My mother has often expressed a wish that you should conduct family worship here, and you must make up your mind to do so."

This was adding fuel to flame; so, observing my restlessness, she said, when bidding me good-night, "Robert, forgive me for adding to your excitement" (that was easily done,—the forgiveness, I mean); "you need a good night's rest." I did very much, but did not get it.

I went to bed immediately on reaching home, but tossed and tumbled about, angry at myself for being unwilling to undertake a duty which should not have unhinged me, having been at one time an aspirant to the Christian ministry. My conscience smote me for being undecided on religious matters; I resolved to be more earnest, and began to compose my first social prayer. As I tried, I found one part forgotten while another was being thought

out, and was about to rise and *write* a prayer, but checked myself, and resolved to be a *man* (when a man does this, he is more likely to prove himself a child), and to look for help when it was needed where it is to be found.

Next night found me at Greenknowe, quietly retailing Mr. and Mrs. Barrie's sayings. The "books" were brought in before supper, and I at least got through the service. Agnes said she was much obliged to me: Mrs. Stewart said little more than "Thank you;" but after the old lady had retired, Agnes told me, in an indirect, quiet way, that Mr. M'Nab never referred to her mother as "His aged servant," which I had unwisely done, but as "the handmaid of the Lord." A young college friend lost a legacy by making a similar mistake in the house of a maiden aunt. My readers will excuse me for leaving this bit to suggest its own lesson. Mrs. Stewart was barely sixty years of age: how our ideas of "aged" change as we age ourselves!

I carried quite a bundle of letters to the post office that night, many of them invitations to the marriage, others P.P.C.s, which I got explained by Agnes, after a quick sideward movement of the head downward, followed by a slow movement of it upward, and an inquiring stare, as much as to say, Do you *really* not know? "It stands for *pour prendre congé*—to take leave, to say good-bye."

"Oh," said I, "Mrs. Barrie spoke about P.P.C.; and when I asked the meaning, she said something about French, and to ask you. That's P.P.C., is it?"

The marriage took place, but I spare my readers an account of it. I cannot describe the dresses so as to *inform* the ladies, nor the presents (which now-a-days are so numerous and so costly as to have to undergo the trying ordeal of being laid out for exhibition in a special room), for these were more useful than ornamental. Many of them were esteemed for the donor's sake rather than for their intrinsic value; none more so than a book, called *Cottage Comforts*, from Mrs. Barrie, which proved very useful to my wife, and became her present to young housekeepers in whom she was interested; many of these, in afterlife, thanked her for the good hints and help it gave them. Mr. Barrie gave me a copy of the Confession of Faith, and

asked me to read it carefully. Although it was the standard of the Church to which I belonged, and I had declared my adherence to it, I had hardly ever opened it. I did read it carefully (no easy task), and thought many of its statements harsh, and stated so baldly in logical order and theological language, that they seemed quite different from the teachings of the Bible, interwoven and relieved as these are by illustration, narrative, and incident; and I still think, because it wants the charm of the associations with which the doctrines are conjoined in the Scriptures, that it is apt to bewilder, if not to prejudice unfavourably, the ordinary reader; but the more I examine it, and compare the parallel passages (*i.e.* references to texts confirming the doctrines), the more I feel it deserves the place Mr. Barrie gives it in relation to the Bible,—"an excellent summary of which is to be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith." Although the excellence is more marked than the summariness; it is a pretty long *summary*. The "Apostles' Creed" comes nearer that.

Dinner—"The Collation" Mrs M'Nab called it—was served almost immediately after the marriage, and was followed by a little speechmaking. Mr. Barrie's speech, in proposing our health, was neat and hearty. He had a hit at me "once thinking of getting married;"—told a story of a lad who, when going to seek a wife, looked so unhappy that his mother said to him, "Keep up yer heart, Johnnie, ma man; faint heart never won fair lady;" "Eh, mother," said Johnnie, "I've mair need to keep it down, for it's amaist in my mou' already;"—wished us many happy days, and hoped our married life would be happier than his had been. It took many of us some time to see that this wish was a very, very good one.

My uncle proposed Mrs. Stewart's health. He was a plain, blunt man, and spoke of her as his "auld friend." Mrs. Stewart was in grand spirits, and said cheerily, "Auld? Mr. Martin! auld? I'm no sae auld as you." "Weel, ye're as auld-like, ony way," said the honest man. Mrs. Stewart joined as heartily in the laugh that followed as any one, and it was so prolonged that he ended his speech by a nod to Mrs. Stewart, and "Here's t'ye, mem; your very good health."

A confirmed bachelor proposed the bridesmaids. He was, of course, unable to do justice to the toast, with "*such*" bridesmaids, etc.

Mr. M'Nab gave the health of Mr. Barrie, and spoke well; my uncle said he had "a grand stock o' dictionar' and college-bred words."

Some songs were sung. The bachelor friend had a fine voice, and had cultivated it carefully. Few could equal him at "Gae fetch to me a pint o' wine;" and when pressed to sing it, he bantered about having lost his best song, "O Nanny, wilt thou gang wi' me?" ("Nanny" being familiarly used for Agnes, the bride's name); he had not even got round sufficiently to try "My Nannie's awa'," but hoped he would regain his spirits; he would try "When our king comes o'er the water," and gave it in fine style. A cousin of Agnes, her senior by a very few years, sang "A'body's like to get married but me," with so much sweetness and humour, as to put our bachelor friend into exuberant spirits. When she had finished the following verse, the last one—

> "It's hard to tak' shelter behint a laigh dyke,
> It's hard to gang wi' ane ye dinna weel like,
> It's hard to forsake ane ye fain wad gang wi',
> But it's harder that a'body's married but me,"—

my uncle blurted out, "Ye maun be ill to please; it canna hae been for want o' offers." He was pressed to sing, and did his best; the words were new to all of us, but the tune, "Johnnie Cope," was familiar. He said it was written by a friend of his, "a neighbour farmer whase grund marches wi' mine." We suspected the author was *always* very near him. He told that he had sung it at a rent dinner in his laird's house, and the laird was delighted, although it "wasna jist exactly what he wad like to happen to himsel'":

THE FROSTIT CORN.

Tune—"Johnnie Cope."

> "Oh, I'm a young farmer hard set by the frost,
> My gude expectations hae sairly been cross't,
> My craps that look't weel, they are noo nearly lost,
> By thir calamitous mornin's.

"In the midst o' last simmer it was understude
That we wad a' haen plenty o' gude halesome fude,
For man an' for beast; an' we ettled to dae gude,
But the frost it has backit it sairly.

"An' when that the frost it did gang awa',
The rain it came on like to ruin us a';
It rained that lang, that it shortened the straw,
An' added aye the mair till our mornin'.

"But yet for a' that we maunna compleen,
It was sae ordered, or it ne'er wad ha' been;
It was maybe for our gude, tho' *that* hasna yet been seen,
For to humble our pride in the mornin'.

"When things lookit weel, a scheme I had laid,
I promised to marry a bloomin' young maid,
To share o' the o'ercome when a'thing was paid,
But the frost it has backit it sairly.

"But my crap as it is, it is noo in the yaird,
An' still for the lassie I hae a regaird;
I think that I'll marry her, an' no pay the laird,—
Let him ken there was frost in the mornin'.

"An' if he should break out in ragin' and strife,
He may weel tak' the gear, but he'll no tak' my life:
If I should hae naething else, I will aye hae my wife
To comfort me in the mornin'."

Need I say that the applause was loud, and long, and *real?*

Marriage trips, wedding tours, were not so common forty years ago as they are now: we had none. Shortly after my uncle's song was finished, and with the glee it inspired still beaming in their faces, the guests went home with us, after saluting us with a shower of old shoes "for luck." There was the usual gathering of noisy children round the bride's door, waiting for the coppers scattered on such occasions; and as they scrambled for them, we got into the post-chaise, and were driven home, followed by an increasing number of children cheering in an intermittent way, all anxious to be in time for the "scatterin' o' the ha'pennies," which had to be repeated at the bridegroom's door. There was an outer

circle of grown-up people, who showed their goodwill by a welcoming cheer. As Agnes crossed her threshold, my eldest sister, who had come to "receive" her, allowed an oat cake to fall on the young wife's head; and the younger folks scrambled for the pieces, as these had some not very clearly defined faculty of foretelling their future luck, especially if confirmed by a dream over the bride's-cake. Agnes was placed by the matrons present at the head of the supper table, and thereby installed as mistress of the house After supper there was a dance, in which the elderly folks joined, the gentlemen with demonstrative glee. The more matronly ladies required a good deal of pressing—their "dancin' days were bye;" but most of them tripped through a short reel, others kept remonstrating with their husbands, who were oftener on foot, and even when looking on capered and "hooched" (*i.e.* shouted merrily):—"Tammas, Tammas! ye're forgettin' yersel';"—"Stop that auld man o' mine; he'll hurt himsel';"—"Oh man, James, ye're ower auld for sic nonsense. Let the young folks carry on the dancin' noo."

After the first dance, in which the bride's partner was the oldest relative on my side, and the seniors had shown their *steps*, they mostly settled to be spectators, all the while enjoying the frolics of the young folk as much as their own canty cracks, while the juniors carried on the ball right merrily. Old Scotch songs were sung, and kindly sentiments uttered, as those will readily believe whose memory can recall the homely convivialities of forty or fifty years ago. My uncle was pressed by old and young to sing another song like "The Frostit Corn,"—"one we did not hear every day,"—"a real country-fireside song." He said he "would gie ane; it was no' as gude as 'The Frostit Corn.' It was ca'd 'The Country Rockin'.' But most o' you will no' ken what a rockin' is. It's a gatherin' o' neebors for a night's diversion. The women brang their 'rocks'—things for spinning woo' or lint wi',—an' birled an' span an' crackit awa'. I've seen them hunders o' times in my young days, but there's no' sic a thing noo as 'the rock and the wee pickle tow.' Mind, the sang is hamespun an' countrified":

THE COUNTRY ROCKIN'.

"It has often been alloo'd that the best o' human life
Is the hours o' social harmony when free from party strife,
When freendship smiles and love beguiles 'mang lads and lasses kindly jokin';
These joys we only find when assembled at a country rockin'.
Chorus—Whack-fal-al-de-dal-al, etc.

"When the gudeman frae the fire bids us frankly venture ben,
In hamely sangs and social joys a nicht wi' him to spen',
The welcome kind attracts each mind, we needna ither friendly token,
When we join the honest social core assembled at a country rockin'.

"Noo, since we're cheerie met for a nicht o' social joy,
Let every care be banished far that wad our peace destroy;
When freendship smiles and love beguiles, at sangs we'll hae a hearty yokin',
An' we'll chant the lays o' Robbie Burns, wha first described the country rockin'.

"An' when we tak' our hameward road, it's no' taen sair amiss,
Tho' frae some bonnie smilin' face we steal a wee bit kiss,
Her heart to move, an' tell our love in vows that never will be broken,
Till in some biggin' o' our ain we hae a hearty country rockin'."

In the whack-fal-al-de-dal-al every voice joined, and over and over again, after the last verse, the chorus rang through the room; and, "Anither, Mr. Martin, anither like that!" was rained on the canny man. During the pause, Auntie Mattie, a sister of Mrs. Stewart's, said, "Sing the 'Farmer's Ingle,' Mr. Martin, for auld langsyne. I like it better than the 'Rockin'."

"Sae dae I," said my uncle, "but it's threadbare noo."

"Threadbare!" said Auntie Mattie; "threadbare, did ye say, Mr. Martin? A sang that's worth ca'in' a sang at a' will never get threadbare, ony mair than the sun 'll get auld-fashioned altho' we see't every day o' our lives; and ye'll surely sing it to obleege me?"

Auntie Mattie was a sonsy, kindly, cheery woman—everybody's body; but she hardly expected my uncle to bring herself in for a song, by the paction he made.

"Mattie," said he,—"oh, I beg yer pardon, I should hae ca'd ye Mrs. Dickson, but ye lookit sae like what ye did

langsyne that Mattie cam' oot before I kent,—I'll sing the 'Farmer's Ingle' if you'll sing the 'Lawland lads think they are fine.' Ye sang't at our waddin', an' it's ringin' in my heid yet. Thae auld sangs are worth a bushel o' the new trash that folk ca' sangs noo-a-days. Come awa', my bonnie leddy, let's hear the 'Lawland lads,' and ye'll hae the 'Farmer's Ingle' as weel as I can gie't; that ye will."

Auntie Mattie said, "Hoots!" and "Nonsense!" and "Her voice was clean gane;" but her singing of the "Lawland lads" contradicted all these statements, and was so sweet, so true, and so natural, as to command silence at the second note, which deepened as she proceeded. The verse—

"Few compliments between us pass,
I ca' him aye my Hieland laddie,
An' he ca's me his Lawland lass,
An' rows me in his tartan plaidie"—

as *she* sang it, is a thing to be remembered. When she had finished and the sincere applause was over, which took the shape of little complimentary speeches to her, and expressions of mutual delight to one another, rather than the noisy demonstration which had followed my uncle's songs, he said, "Eh, Mattie—hoots! excuse me. Eh, Mrs. Dickson, there's no' a fail'd inch o' ye. That sang was like caller air; it was jist grand, splendid a'thegither. It's taen the breath frae me completely. I daurna sing after that."

"Come away, Mr. Martin," said she; "a bargain's a bargain. Come away wi' the 'Farmer's Ingle,'" which he did. And I give the words as he sang them, for, although common in country districts in my young days, they are seldom heard now. The chorus was well known to us all, and we *did* join in it:—

"Let Turks triumph, let tyrants prey,
Let poets sing melodiously,
Let Turks triumph and priests live single,
But my delight's at the farmer's ingle.
Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place
Where freedom shines on ilka face;
My wish is while on earth to mingle
Wi' gude honest people at the farmer's ingle.

"In winter, when the frost an' snaw
Drives a' the masons frae the wa',
Your hearts wad warm and yer ears wad tingle
To hear the cracks at the farmer's ingle.
Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place, etc.

"The British ship's the seaman's boast,
Success to tredd's the merchant's toast,
The miser for his money does pingle,
But my delight's in the farmer's ingle.
Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place, etc.

"The sailor boldly ploughs the main,
The soldier flies o'er heaps of slain,
But my wish on earth's ne'er to live single;
Here's a bumper to the farmer's ingle.
Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place," etc.

The "thinking of going home," which had already been hinted at once or twice, was now general, and the party broke up with good wishes and kind feelings warmly expressed: "We've haen a grand nicht o't!"—"Lang may ye be spared to ane anither, an' aye be as happy as ye've made your freends the nicht!"—crowned by "Auld Lang-syne," with, as the play-bills have it, "the whole strength of the company."

Our house was above the shop; separate villas, now so common for tradesmen and shopkeepers, were in those days only occupied by the gentry. The system of villas in the outskirts has shortened the hours of attendance, and is healthier, but the above-the-shop houses kept a man, and often, be it said with all honour, his wife, thoroughly at the head of affairs. In many businesses, then as yet, the wives were invaluable. Who cannot recall the active, polite, effective way in which the Mistress "kept the shop"? and how nice it was to be "served" by her own self, with her interchange of homely civilities, and the ready knack she had of hitting upon what was wanted! This good custom is happily still not uncommon. Long may it continue!

My business did not require my wife's attention in the shop, but in my absence she occasionally looked in to help the assistants, and took to the work, and the customers to her. Often, also, when the assistants were out, she came

down to keep me (maybe herself) from wearying, and soon made such changes as only an orderly woman can devise. From being interested, she easily became acquainted with the details, and made alterations here and reforms there which resulted in increased prosperity and comfort. We went on steadily making things better, first got to be easier in money matters, then laid past a little, then looked out for investments. But I am the writer, not the subject, of these "Bits," and shall spare my readers the dry details of a homely life in a country village. I may add that we had no extra call upon our means in the way of having to bring up a family. This was a sore subject many years ago; it is a mere fact now.

My wife being anxious to get everything about the house to her mind, began next morning to clear up, and sent for people who were glad to get some of the substantial remains of the feast to eke out their scanty tables. One of these, Peggy Ritchie, had been a servant in my father's house at the time of his death, and my housekeeper for nearly a year thereafter. She had married Gavin Sinclair, a widower with a moderately-sized family. Her father was the sexton and minister's man, but now unfit for work, and Gavin, or Guy as he was commonly called, "officiated" instead of old Adam Ritchie. Peggy told my wife she was "thankfu' to get onything, forbye proud to be mindit, for Guy was very slack the noo; there werena near sae mony deaths as ane would expect this cauld weather. It was very unfortunate; it came at an ill time; if there wasna something doin' in the kirkyard soon, it wad be a bad job. Guy could say, as the beadle o' Borthwick said to the Lord Chief Baron, 'He hadna buried a leevin' craitur' for six weeks.'"

"How is your father keeping, Peggy?" asked my wife.

"Very middlin', Mrs. Martin" (Peggy used *Mrs.* very often and *very* graciously); "but he was sayin' to Guy last nicht, after Mr. Barrie gaed out,—he ca'd in to see my faither; he often ca's. I'm aye glad to see him. He kens what puir folk need in cauld weather. Well, as I was sayin', my faither says to Guy, 'Be thankfu' ye hae Mr. Barrie to deal wi'; he's a considerate man an' a gentleman. Ane o' the ministers before him, no' to name onybody,—it's as

weel no' to gie names,—weel, ane o' the ministers in my day,' says my faither, 'was the maist pernickety, impatient, bathersome craitur' ever was seen. If he wanted onything done, ye must do't in an instant, or he was fair dancin' wi' passion. It was a thrang time in the kirkyard, a sair winter, and I had some idle men helpin' me. The minister was getting something done to the manse, and aye send-sendin' for me to help the tradesmen, and to come that very moment. I've actually seen me,' says my faither, 'hae to bring men out o' the very grave to serve him.' My faither's sair failed, Mrs. Martin—sair failed."

Knowing that Peggy had been my housekeeper, my wife asked if there was anything I was specially fond of, any particular dishes, etc.

Peggy's sense of importance was flattered at being *consulted* (as she afterwards put it), and she answered, with a profusion of gesture, "The maister,—Maister Martin,—there was no man could be easier pleased wi' his meat than him. Gie him a lamb leg an' a berry tart to his denner, an' he was perfectly satisfied." So he may, thought my wife.

"Speakin' about denners," continued Peggy, "Miss Park got a terrible fricht last Saturday nicht. The flesher's laddie was takin' a sheep's heid to the Mathieson's, but as there was naebody in the house, he raps on Miss Park's door,—she stops next them. Weel, her servant was out, an' she answers the door hersel'. She's an awfu' nervish craitur', so she opens a wee bit o' the door, a' shakin'; and disna the laddie shove the sheep's heid bang in! The door was that little open that the neck rubbit against her hands; and he bawls out, 'Mathieson's heid,' an' let it fa' in the lobby, an' was awa' in a moment. Puir Miss Park was sae fear'd that she couldna move, but keepit starin' awa' at the ugly black heid, thinking a' sorts o' things. When her servant cam' in she was fair chitterin' wi' fricht. It was real thochtless o' the laddie."

Blinkbonny had its events and "foys" (*i.e.* entertainments), but nothing of special interest occurred until the Disruption of 1843, of which I will treat in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

BOTH SIDES OF THE CHURCH QUESTION.

"They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts;
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on."—*Burns.*

THE agitation which resulted in the Disruption of 1843, when nearly five hundred ministers left the Established Church of Scotland and formed the "Free Church," extended even to the quiet parish of Blinkbonny, although Mr. Barrie had not taken an active part in the conferences held on the subjects in dispute between the Government and the "Non-Intrusionists," as they were sometimes called. He rather avoided the subject; but in the presbytery his attitude indicated that his sympathies were with those who ultimately formed the Free Church, so much so that many of his friends remonstrated with him, —urging him to be careful, to consider his family, not to commit himself hastily. The latter advice Mr. Barrie carried out by cordially thanking his advisers, and assuring them that he would endeavour to act conscientiously and "judeeciously." Thus, although he did not reveal his opinions, his answer was made the basis of different conclusions, according as "conscientiously" or judeeciously" was put foremost.

He more nearly committed himself to Bell than to any other person, and this accidentally. She was the head, the only gardener, and early spring found her deeply absorbed in the arrangement of the season's crops. She had already

planted peas and beans, and sundry vegetables; had carefully cut up early potatoes for seed, making each one yield as many bits with eyes or buds as she thought safe; and had the "dibble" in her hand to form the holes into which to drop the seed, when Mr. Barrie, returning from the village, stopped at the "break" which she was beginning to plant.

He never passed Bell without some kindly word. In the garden it was generally, "Well, Bell, always at it?" and her "Yes, sir" followed him, for he generally walked on. But on this occasion he stood for a few seconds, long enough for Bell to look at him inquiringly, then to wonder whether to speak or not. At length Mr. Barrie, after a heavy introductory sigh, said,—

"Well, Bell, planting the early potatoes, I see. How will you look if we have to flit soon and leave the crop to some other body?"

"Flit!" said Bell; "flit! What d'ye mean, sir? We'll flit nane;" and forgetting her usual good manners, she added, "Ye havena gotten a call to ony ither kirk that I've heard o', or to ony o' the big town kirks, have ye, sir?"

"No, Bell, it is nothing of that nature; but we *may* have to leave the manse for all that, and if we have, we will leave the garden in such a state as to be a credit to us." Then collecting himself, and observing her perplexed face, he made a passing remark on the weather, and moved towards the manse, too confused to be able to reply to Bell's practical question, which cut him to the quick, simple as it was, "What for did ye no' tell me that before I cut the pitaties, sir?"

The question was not asked in Bell's usual respectful tone, and although she saw Mr. Barrie enter the house, she kept looking at the closed door as if it should answer her; then slowly surveyed the garden, the mould of which had been enriched by her industry. Her eye rested first on what she had already planted, next on what she intended to plant; wistfully on the rows already above ground, which, a few minutes before, had been her pride; then looked again at the manse door with an expression of bewilderment. Taking the hamper which contained the seed-potatoes in one hand, and still holding

the dibble in the other, she walked dreamily round those parts of the garden that were planted. The pace was very unlike her everyday one; it was slow, heavy, interrupted. At every few steps she looked solemnly around her, until she reached the top of the garden, then, as if some forgotten engagement had flashed across her mind, she walked briskly to an outhouse, laid down her perplexing seed-potatoes, locked the door, and tidied herself more quickly and more carelessly than usual. Putting on her shawl and a black worsted cap or "mutch" with a crimson border (for she wore a bonnet on Sundays only), something like a hood (it had a name which I now forget), she went to Mrs. Barrie to ask if she needed anything from the village,—that being Bell's way of asking whether she could get out for a short time.

"Nothing, Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "nothing at all that I remember; I am anxious to have as little as possible in the house at present."

This added to Bell's confusion and quickened her step. She made straight for the village. I happened to be in the doorway at the time, and, struck with the smartness of her pace and apparent excitement, I apprehended something might be wrong at the manse, and took a step or two forwards. When about two yards distant she asked abruptly, "Hoo's the garden doing, Mr. Martin?"

"Just middlin', Bell; come round and see it."

As we went she further asked, "Have ye gotten your early taties in yet?"

"No," said I; "my garden is far behind this year. I have been trying to get the new house at Knowe Park ready for occupation at Whitsunday. Ye'll see that we're putting a better house on the Knowe Park? It's a nice situation. The old cottage was done, so we're putting up a good plain house; the other tradesmen are well forward, but the plasterers have dilly-dallied; they're a provoking set."

We were now in the garden. Bell's first remark was, "This is no' like you, Mr. Martin; but, however, I want to ask ye a secret" (so Bell put it). "Can you tell me if Mr. Barrie has gotten a call, or if he's likely to get a call, to ony other kirk?"

"Not that I know or have heard of."

Then she told me very circumstantially what Mr. Barrie had said, and what Mrs. Barrie had said, and ended by asking, "What can *you* mak' o' what he said about the taties?"

I tried to explain it was possible that many ministers would leave the Church of Scotland on account of something the British Government had done.

"What!" said Bell firmly; "that cannot be—that's no' possible. The Government wadna daur to meddle wi' Mr. Barrie. There may be as gude ministers, but there's nane better. Let them try to put out Mr. Barrie, and they would see a bonnie stramash,—that they would. Leave the manse! Na; thae covenantin' times are a' past. Just let Government try't."

I replied it was not at all likely that force would be required, as I believed, if the Government persisted in doing what the ministers thought wrong, they would leave the Church quietly, rather than submit to have their rights and those of the Christian Church interfered with.

"There's nae Government will ever gang against gude ministers, at ony rate against Mr. Barrie; they're the best friends the Government has," said Bell. Then looking at it in her particular light, she added, "Will ony ither body, Government or no Government, get the peas and cabbage and taties out o' *our* garden?" for Bell considered herself an active partner.

"I hope not," said I, "but it is not *very* unlikely."

"If I thocht that, I would neither plant nor sow anither dreel—that I would not; and if you'll take the early taties I've cut, I'll *sell* ye them. They're a grand kind, the auld early Dons,—grand growers, lots at every shaw, and gude eaters,—nothing to beat them for size and quality."

I agreed to take Bell's seed-potatoes, which partly pacified her; but she broke out afresh, "It's no' possible! Leave the manse—na!" until I interrupted her by saying, as Knowe Park garden would need to be put right at once, I would be happy to buy all her spare plants and seeds, but she should still keep the manse garden right, as there was no saying what might happen.

Bell gave a qualified assent to this proposal: "We'll see;

but I maun awa' hame. But I'll need to take something up wi' me;" the something was a bunch of spunks (bits of thin split wood, very dry, about six inches long, tipped with sulphur, used for lighting candles or fires—unknown now that lucifer matches are so common), and a few pounds of salt.

Mr. Barrie looked in upon me shortly after Bell left, and after a short general talk quietly remarked that the house at Knowe Park—villa, he termed it—was well forward, and looked a nice place. "Was I going to build in the field on the east side? Had I a tenant in view? What might be the rent? Would it be ready for Whitsunday—and dry?"

His manner and questions evinced something more than mere friendly interest, and following as they did so much in the train of Bell's visit, I concluded that he would "come out" if the Government did not yield. It had been evident for some time that his sympathies were with what was then called the "Evangelical" party, although that name was by him considered unfair to the other side, and he preferred to call it the protesting party; but he had taken no prominent part in the public discussions, and scrupulously abstained from introducing ecclesiastical politics into his pulpit ministrations. "The good seed is the Word of God," he would often say; "and, as ordained to minister to the souls of my parishioners, I try to preach the glorious gospel of Christ faithfully, fully, and practically, avoiding controversy of all kinds, political, ecclesiastical, theological, or dogmatic. The only way to do real good, even in opposing error or bigotry, is to preach the truth in love."

April had passed; May had covered the earth with beauty, and blossom, and promise. Never did the manse look so well, or its surroundings more delightful, than on the evening before Mr. Barrie left for the General Assembly in Edinburgh. I made an errand to the manse, ostensibly to ask him to procure a certain book for me when in town, but really to try if I could pick up an inkling of his mind on the Church controversy, and to offer to be of any service in my power.

Mrs. Barrie and he were sauntering in the garden. He was grave, and as they stopped opposite a familiar flower,

both seemed sad. Bell (a most unusual thing for her) was stealthily eyeing them from the kitchen window, having turned up a corner of the little green-striped dimity screen. When she saw me, she signalled me to come to the kitchen door by jerking her thumb in that direction, adding a slight trembling motion of her clenched hand, to express further that she wished me to do so unobserved by Mr. and Mrs. Barrie. When I entered the back court, she at once began to speak in a voice, subdued, but full of emotion.

"Whatever's gaun to happen, Mr. Martin? The minister has been bundle-bundlin' in the study for twa or three days. Mrs. Barrie has been clearin' oot auld corners, or rather searchin' into them, for there's no' much to clear out that's either useless or lumbery in this house. Is it possible we maun leave? It's no' possible. I have a gude mind to speak to Mr. Barrie mysel'. Sir John was here last night, and I heard him say as he gaed through the lobby, 'For all our sakes, for your own sake, for your family's sake, for the sake of the Church of our fathers, for His sake who wishes all His people to be one, think over the matter again before you make a schism in His body. Carry out the good doctrine you preached the other day when lecturing about the town clerk of Ephesus, that we "ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly."' Mr. Barrie only said, 'Thank you, Sir John;' but as he was coming 'ben' the lobby from seeing Sir John away, I took the liberty o' saying, 'Sir John's a clever man, a sensible man, and he's aye been your friend. So, sir, excuse me for saying I hope you will'—but I got no further; the tear was in Mr. Barrie's e'e, and that fairly upset me. Will ye no' speak till him, Mr. Martin, seriously and firmly? Leave the manse, and the kirk, and the garden!—I wadna leave them if I was him unless they sent a regiment of dragoons."

I answered I would try. "Na," said she, "ye maun baith try't and do't too. He's gaun to Edinburgh the morn to the Assembly, and they say he'll settle whether to leave the Kirk or bide in't before he comes hame again."

Leaving Bell, I walked to the front of the manse, and stood admiring the scene. The evening sun was setting behind the western hills. Nature had donned her summer

mantle of beauty and verdure,—the garden lay smiling at my feet; the fields beyond were green, loamy, and rich; the stream glistering and murmuring in the valley; the distant hills lighted up with the evening glow; the clouds red, golden, and grey, massed or straggling over the glorious sky. I felt that to leave such a place was no easy matter, and as I had given little attention to the Church controversy, I was at a loss what to say. Mr. and Mrs. Barrie observing me, came forward. After a quiet greeting, I said, "This is a lovely scene. I find myself quoting from *Marmion*:—

> 'Where's the coward that would not dare
> To fight for such a land?'"

I gave the quotation strongly; it startled Mr. Barrie. He said softly and dreamily, as if speaking to himself, "Without were *fightings*, within were fears;" then looking me steadily in the face he added, "I go to Edinburgh to-morrow,—a most eventful journey for mine and me. In all probability I shall return disjoined from the Established Church of Scotland, and no longer minister of the parish of Blinkbonny. Excuse me, Mr. Martin, for feeling perplexed and anxious."

Bell having slipped forward very quietly, had by this time become a listener. She looked at me with an imploring face, and urged me by a significant gesture to speak out. I tried to say something, but Mr. Barrie's look was so calm and overpowering, that I could only get out—"I dare not presume to advise in the matter; several of your friends will follow you if you decide to come out; and 'the Lord will provide.'"

This was too much or rather too little for Bell, so she suddenly joined the colloquy, addressing herself, however, to me. "Maybe He will, if there's a real need-be; but what sense or religion either can there be in leaving a kirk and manse provided for us already, and where He has countenanced us and given us peace and prosperity, for a chance o' anither or maybe nane at a'? I would see anither door opened first; as Sir John said yestreen about the clerk o' the toun o' Ephesus, we should do nothing rashly. Think

on Mrs. Barrie an' the bairns, and the garden and the dumb craiturs, and," looking at the churchyard, she added softly, "Wee Nellie."

Bell had joined the party suddenly, and the above sentence was uttered by her almost in a breath. It made Mr. Barrie wince. Mrs. Barrie observing this, at once left us; and got Bell to follow her, by saying that doubtless Mr. Martin had business with Mr. Barrie. Mrs. Barrie did her best to soothe Bell by agreeing with her: "Yes, Bell, it will be a severe trial to leave the manse."

"And a terrible risk, too," said Bell. "Oh, mem, try and dinna let the maister do't, at least no' as suddenly as he speaks of."

"I leave Mr. Barrie entirely to the guidance of his own conscience in the matter. If he goes, I go."

"So will we a', I fancy."

"Well, Bell," said Mrs. Barrie thoughtfully, "we may not be able to keep a servant. If we are, and you are willing to go with us, you will be an immense help to us all."

This overwhelmed Bell. Leaving the manse was bad, but leaving the family was terrible; such a thing had never entered her mind. Luckily, "Daisy' the cow began to low impatiently, which relieved Mrs. Barrie of present embarrassment. Bell methodically started for her milking-pail, muttering, "The very coo's no' hersel' the nicht, naether am I; I'm behint time wi' Daisy, and kye should aye be milkit regular,"—which Bell set about with more than her ordinary vigour, all the time speaking to Daisy about leaving the manse, and stiffly arguing the matter with her. The cow did not seem quite to understand Bell; she usually did, and answered her with her meek eyes and stolid face; but Bell's *manner* to-night was so abrupt and excited, that Daisy had probably more than usual difficulty in comprehending the *matter;* she wagged one ear quickly, made sundry short, impatient shakes of her head, and stared intently at Bell, but not with the usual signs of intelligent concert. Daisy could not make it out; neither, alas! could Bell.

I did not go into the manse, although invited by Mr. Barrie. I excused myself on the ground of his requiring

all the time at his disposal to prepare for to-morrow's journey, but said that many along with myself would anxiously await the decision he made, and I asked him to give me as early intimation of it as he conveniently could, assuring him that I would be most happy to be of every service in my power. He thanked me, and putting his arm in mine, we walked slowly down the garden. As we passed between its healthy crops and trim flower-beds, he said,—

"This is Bell's parish, and well tended it is. I am heart-sorry for Bell; it will be a severe trial to her—worthy, honest, laborious Bell!"

We halted at the little wicket gate at the bottom of the garden. There was a sad look on Mr. Barrie's face as he turned round and looked at the pleasantly situated, snug manse. Memory seemed busy unfolding her roll of by-gone days. It had been the home of his happy married life, the birthplace of his children. Then he looked at the church: it had been the sphere of his first life-work, the joy of his heart, the place of his ministry to the flock he loved. Then at the churchyard: there was one little spot tenderly dear, but many others hallowed in his mind by associations of the kind and good who lay there. So absorbed was he in the reflections awakened by these scenes, that he seemed unconscious of my presence, and as his eye travelled from object to object, he spoke sadly and to himself, "Yes, beautiful for situation.—Thou excellest them all.—Olive plants.—Where prayer was wont to be made.—Watch-tower.—Pleasure in her stones.—With Christ; far better.—We shall not all sleep." Then, as if awaking from a dream, he said, "Excuse me, Mr. Martin; 'the old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon.' Every human consideration urges me to remain in the Church of Scotland. I will exhaust every honourable means, for the sake of all concerned, to avert a disruption; but I cannot, I dare not consent to the rights of the Church being infringed or her prerogatives violated; it would be treason to my Master. And bitter, bitter as the alternative is, I will act as my conscience impels me (and I have given the subject the devout consideration it demands), and leave all, although I frankly confess it is a sore trial of

my faith. I fear as I enter into the cloud. I must walk by faith, not by sight."

There was a nobility, a display of true valour in his attitude, tone, and expression that awed me. The fire of his words kindled a flame in my heart, which grew in intensity as he proceeded. When he had finished he seemed as if transfigured; his sadness was gone; he looked like a knight challenging a field of foemen. I could only grasp his hand and stumble out, "The battle is the Lord's; be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God, and the Lord do that which is good in His sight."

He returned the grasp very warmly, and said, "Exactly; that text must be our motto. I thank you for it. But I am detaining you. I shall let you know the result whenever declared, and may possibly be your tenant at Knowe Park." He said this with a pleasant smile. As we parted, I added, "Knowe Park will be made as comfortable as I can make it, although, had I expected such a tenant, it would have received extra care and attention."

"It is perhaps as much as we will be able to afford," said he cheerfully, half-way up the garden. "Good-night again."

As I walked homeward I met Sir John M'Lelland. I knew him as the leading county gentleman of the neighbourhood, and was in the habit of saluting him respectfully, but had rarely spoken to him; I was therefore surprised when he said, "I called at your house, Mr. Martin, but learning you were at the manse, I came to meet you. Have you a spare half-hour? I wish particularly to see you."

"I am quite at your service, Sir John."

"Well, take a quiet turn with me along the road;" which we did. Sir John thus began:

"Mr. Martin, I wish to have a long talk with you about Mr. Barrie. I know that you and he are very intimate. I need not tell you I esteem him very highly. As a minister he has few equals, that we all feel; he is, besides, a gentleman in every sense of the word—a scholar, a man of culture, quite an acquisition to the district. Then Mrs.

Barrie is a delightful creature,—I do not know a more thorough lady than she is; and they have a very nice family—very nice children indeed—good-looking;—so they may well be, considering their parents—the handsomest couple in the parish, I may say in the county. But *that* is by the bye. Well, the party in the Church of Scotland that call themselves the 'Evangelicals,' as if they were the only true preachers of the gospel,—a most unwarrantable and impertinent name for any party to appropriate to themselves, calling their opponents 'Moderates,' as if that were a term of contempt. It would be more consistent if they would let their moderation be known to all men;—but *that* is by the bye.

"Well, these schismatics and agitators—'Evangelicals,' if you like—have raised a hue-and-cry about the Church being in danger, and the Government trampling on the rights of the Christian people; and have pestered not only the church courts, but the courts of law and the Government of the country, by their pertinacious intermeddling with time-honoured institutions and the rights of proprietors. So determined and malignant are the leaders of this movement, that they have dug out one or two exceptional cases (you know the exception proves the rule), and dragged them through the law courts, where they got ignominiously beaten, because justice was administered impartially. This has raised the 'odium theologicum,' the most unreasonable and virulent of all passions; and instead of acting as law-abiding subjects and peacemakers, they are determined (if Government, forsooth, will not yield to *them*) to wreck the Church of Scotland if they can! The law has been clearly laid down by the judges of the land, but these malcontents demand to be allowed to be a law to themselves."

Here Sir John looked very indignant, then went on in a calmer tone: "What I cannot understand is, that ministers, above all others, should object to their own rights being protected. The principal uproar has been about one or two who were appointed to parishes where the people would not receive them, and even the presbytery refused to ordain them. Now, especially in the Church of Scotland, every student, before he is licensed to preach the gospel,

has had a prolonged college education, and several years' training in the divinity halls; and besides, has passed successfully very searching examinations conducted by eminent professors, and has, moreover, under presbyterial superintendence, gone at least creditably through trials for licence, which included sermons on texts assigned to him. Could anything further be desired as a safeguard against unfit men being allowed to be preachers? It is from such that the patron, who is generally the largest proprietor in the parish, and has therefore the greatest interest in it, must make a selection and present a minister to a vacant parish church, not infrequently to the church in which he and his family worship.

"Well, these 'Evangelicals'—ministers themselves, remember—wish it to be in the power of the members of a church (and you know what a mixture church-membership is, of all sorts and conditions—good and indifferent, not to say bad) to reject a licentiate appointed by the patron,—trained as I have just described,—and possibly from whim, or spleen, or spite at the patron, to object to his settlement, which can only be done by objecting to his preaching. To prove their case, I grieve to say, many do not scruple to condemn his services as unedifying, uninteresting, or unintelligible (not unlikely to *them*), or even unsound,—set them up for judges!—and do all in their power to blast the preacher's prospects. Does it not strike you, Mr. Martin, as something very strange that ministers should desire to commit themselves to such tribunals in preference to those now existing?"

I was at a loss how to reply, and Sir John began again with great animation: "What they aim at seems to be a sort of preaching competition, where the man who has the knack of tickling the ears, or wheedling the affections, or flattering the vanities of a congregation, would certainly outweigh the man of more solid parts. The result would be that young ministers would prepare one or two *taking* sermons, and thereby secure parishes; and, what ought to be a congregation of devout worshippers would become a congregation of critics; and some fussy nobody, by dint of sheer impertinence, would set himself—ay, even herself—up as 'grieved

at the prospect of the incalculable injury to be done to the highest interests of the parish,' and with a long face say 'she felt it her duty, her bounden duty, her painful duty,' and stuff of that sort. Dissenting churches have oftener split on the election of preachers than any other question, and bitter and disgraceful results have followed. In such cases votes are counted, not weighed. I knew of a little insignificant 'bodie,'—his neighbours called him 'Little Gab,'—a creature whose family was in poverty and misery through his indolence and intermeddling with other folks' affairs to the neglect of his own. He was a Dissenter, and at the meetings for choosing a minister for the chapel he attended, he chattered and moved and objected and protested, and was so often on his feet with his 'Moderator, I move,'—'Moderator, I object,'—'Moderator, by the Forms of Procedure, page, etc.,'—that he provoked a smart word from one of their best men every way—in education, position, and judgment. This set the bodie fairly up, and although he richly deserved more than he got, he spoke so glibly that he saddled the church with a minister of whom the late Dr. Hunter, on hearing his first sermon after ordination—generally a man's best—said to a friend as they came out of the church, 'Ye'll get that ane to bury.' But *that* is by the bye."

As Sir John seemed to look for me to speak, I merely said, "That was like the doctor. I think I know the church you refer to; Little Gab was a waspish bodie."

He at once resumed: "I am surprised that a man of good sense and sound judgment like Mr. Barrie should be misled by these noisy demagogues—many of them otherwise good men, but on this subject utter fanatics. I spoke to him on the subject the other night, but made no impression. Have you remonstrated with him? Did he say anything on the matter to you to-night?"

I told him what had passed at the manse. When he heard of Mr. Barrie's firm attitude, he said very excitedly: "It is utter folly—it is sheer madness—it is social suicide, bringing ruin on his family for a mere phantom of excited sentimentality! Let him remain in the Church and use constitutional means to reform abuses, if such exist. The

Church of Scotland has had an honoured past, and will have a glorious future. They vowed to maintain and defend her; they are trying to divide and weaken her. Can they not wait patiently until events are ripe? Progress in a complicated body, such as the Church of Scotland, is gradual, and should be deliberate. The leaders of this movement are principally men who have risen to ecclesiastical eminence by their popular gifts. Not a few of them fought bitterly against the Dissenters in the Voluntary controversy (which, by the bye, seems shelved for good and all; the pace was too quick to last), and now they urge their brethren to secede if *their* absurd demands are not immediately conceded I question if the noisiest now will be the first to come out. If they do, I would not be at all surprised to see the same gentlemen the first to rush back again, and change their 'Retract! no, not a hair's-breadth!' into a breakneck stampede, in which they will crush past their deluded followers, and whine pitifully for pardon and *place*. The State has treated them well, too well, and is entitled to have its reasonable conditions fulfilled. They want the pay and the place, but kick at the terms—wish the latter all one-sided; and when the law steps in, with quiet dignity and strict justice, to protect the rights of proprietors, ministers, and people alike, and insists on these being administered according to express statute, the very men who vowed to abide by the law either set it at nought, or demand its subservience to their revolutionary ideas. They wish liberty without control, privileges without conditions, and power to exercise despotism without appeal. And because they cannot get it,—because they should not get it,—because, having respect to the welfare alike of Church and State, they must not get it, they keep crying out about tyranny and treason, and 'spiritual independence,' and what not."

Sir John paused for a little, and I thought he had finished, but something fresh seemed to strike him, and he at it again:—

"By the bye, these folks call themselves the Non-Intrusion party. Was ever title so outrageously violated? Is a proprietor an intruder on his own estate? Only a desperate poacher would say so. Is a man an intruder in his own house? No one but a burglar thinks so. Is a

mother an intruder in her own nursery? Only a vile and cruel nurse, caught in the act of ill-treating the children, would have the audacity to conceive such a monstrous anomaly. Yet these intruding non-intrusionists say to the State that fostered them, and supports them, and that very properly wishes its fundamental principles to be respected, like the poacher, 'Be off! you have no right here;' like the burglar, 'I want this, and will have it by hook or by crook' —crook should be put first; or like the nurse, 'Get out of this nursery! you have no business here; I will do as I like, and if you oppose me I will take the children from you.' I may be carried away by the strong convictions which force themselves upon me as I review the whole proceedings,—the wily, oily sophisms of these non-intrusionists; but excuse me, Mr. Martin, for saying that they should take Judas for their patron, and Herod the king—any of the Herods they like—for their foster-brother."

Sir John seemed to feel that he had gone too far, and excused himself for being so bitter. He was a confirmed Tory, and spoke about "vote-voting, everything was vote-voting now-a-days since that Reform Bill had passed. Give some men a vote in Kirk or State, and they became self-conceited, consequential creatures. The more they are canvassed, the more unbearable they become. But *that* is by the bye. I presume you are a Whig, Mr. Martin, so we will not meddle with politics to-night. Then you really think Mr. Barrie will 'come out'?"

"I'm sure of it, Sir John, if concessions satisfactory to his party are not made by the Government. Mr. Walker of Middlemoor and he start for Edinburgh early to-morrow morning."

"Mr. Walker!" said Sir John; "he is a quiet, peaceable man; he will not be led away by any will-o'-the-wisp nonsense. He will smoke over it, and think over it, and come back parish minister of Middlemoor as heretofore. I am glad Mr. Walker is going with Mr. Barrie; he will give him the common-sense, considerate view of the question—especially the home view, the family and fireside interest, which these enthusiasts seem entirely to ignore. Should a secession take place, there will be a sad awakening, when too

late, to the meaning of these words: 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,'—worse than an infidel—worse!" Then, after a pause of a few seconds, he said, "I'm sorry, very sorry for Mr. Barrie; if it were possible to be angry with such a man, I would feel angry—certainly at his conduct, or rather his reputed intentions. I am glad Mr. Walker goes with him. As member of Assembly for a royal burgh, I intend to be present the day after to-morrow, and will set Mr. Walker on Mr. Barrie." Then looking at his watch, he said, "It is later than I thought: do you think it would be of any use for me to see Mr. Barrie to-night? The fact is, I cannot rest over this matter—it's too—too—too dreadful altogether."

I hinted as politely as I could that I thought nothing would shake Mr. Barrie's resolve. Sir John "feared as much," but would, through Mr. Walker and other friends, try to *save* Mr. Barrie from"—here he hesitated, repeating, "from—from—well, I cannot use a milder word—*ruin* to himself and his family—*certain* ruin." He shook hands frankly, hoped he had not kept me too long, and promised to let me know how matters went; and as he bade me good-night, he looked towards the manse and said, "I cannot get Mr. Barrie and his family out of my head."

Late as it was, I went to inspect the new house and garden at Knowe Park. I had pushed on the tradesmen, and it was all but finished, and *drying* nicely. The garden had received special attention. Except immediately around the house, the grounds had not been interfered with; and as they were stocked with good fruit-trees and bushes in the days of the former proprietor, these only required trimming and pruning. Bell's potatoes and spare plants were further forward than those in the manse garden. When I got home it took me a long time to tell Agnes the events of the night. Both of us were puzzled as to whether Mr. Barrie or Sir John was right—we rather inclined to Sir John's notion of patience and prudence; and while we admired Mr. Barrie's noble resolution, we, especially my wife, spoke of "whatever was to become of Mrs. Barrie and the dear bairns?" and could not see through it at all.

CHAPTER V.

BLINKBONNY AND THE DISRUPTION.

"But there are true hearts, which the sight
Of trouble summons forth;
Though known in days of past delight,
We knew not half their worth."

Thos. Haynes Bayley.

SIR JOHN wrote his steward to tell me that Mr. Barrie had left the Established Church; the steward showed me the letter; it was a compound of amazement, sympathy, and anger.

Scarcely had I finished it, when Bell, evidently in a state of great excitement, came in and said, "Eh, Mr. Martin, it's ower true; we'll hae to flit! Mr. Barrie's gi'en up the kirk, and he has nae richt noo to the manse. I canna tell exactly when we'll be putten out, but the mistress says we'll no' be allowed to bide lang. I wadna like to be the Government that put Mr. Barrie out o' house and ha'. Some Mordecai will rise ere lang to gi'e us relief, or some Nehemiah to speak to the king and queen about the desolation and affliction and reproach. Them that comes to pit us out will maybe find an enemy in the garden, like Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. What's the world comin' till?"

Sir John's steward knew Bell well, and tried to soothe her by saying, "Don't bother yourself. If Mr. Barrie adheres to his resolution to leave the Established Church, no one would presume to hurry him out of the manse; at all events, he could have it until a successor is appointed."

But Bell was not in a sociable mood, and only said, "Sooner or later we maun flit." Then handing me a letter

from Mr. Barrie, she added she would step into the kitchen until I got it read, and wait to see if there was any answer.

The letter confirmed the steward's news, and stated it would be a favour if I would reserve for him the first offer of Knowe Park, and he would be home as soon as possible. After the steward left I told Bell that Mr. Barrie's letter was about Knowe Park, and asked if she would come with me to see if it would suit. This was rather a sudden following up of the affair, as Bell had convinced herself that Mr. Barrie would never leave the manse; and although she had generally ended her remarks on the subject by asking, "Wherever could we gang?" she had not tried to answer the question. After a little hesitation she said, "Knowe Park! that's where Mr. Taylor lived,—he had a grand apple tree—an 'Oslin pippin.' Is't aye yonder? It's a nice garden—a nice place to stop. I've noticed them buildin' a new house there, but I didna pay muckle attention till't. I wad like to see't. I'll be very glad to gang." And off we set.

A walk of a few minutes brought us to the gate, and Bell expressed herself pleased with the look of the place. "It was a nice house—fine big windows—faced the south—wad hae a grand view—the garden was bigger than she thocht, and in gude order. Is thae my plants?—they were thrivin'." With such snatches did Bell accompany her survey of the grounds before she went into the house. She criticised the inside more minutely, her standard being the manse, and as she went from room to room she spoke of each, or rather thought aloud: "This is the kitchen—it's very nice—lichtsome—plenty o' room—it looks a nice grate, or I fancy ye'll ca' that a range. I never tried them, but they say they're handy. Presses—pantry. What's ben here?—washing-house—coal-house—awmrie [almonry]—bedroom. Very nice; this will do fine. Noo, what about a study?" I suggested a bedroom, but she gave that only a partial approval; the other rooms pleased her. When we reached the drawing-room, "Drawing-room!" said she; "we hae nane at the manse, and Mrs. Barrie thinks we get on fine without it. We'll make this the study. But what about the outhouses?"

These exercised Bell greatly. There was a range of old buildings in the north corner of the place, behind the bleaching-green, which I had left as it was; it was a compound of stable, hay-loft, cart-shed, fruit-room, and potato-house, but required considerable repair. I was undecided whether to repair it, or replace it by a building more in keeping with the house, but Bell protested against new outhouses. "Na, na; nae mair expenses. Whitewash it, gi'e it a bit sort up, and it will fit us exactly." Then going to the hedge on the east, she asked, "Wha's aught this park?"

"It goes with the house," said I, "and is at Mr. Barrie's service."

Bell was delighted at now seeing her way to bring "Daisy" and the hens. She became quite cheerful, and left me, saying, "It's the very place for us. I wadna say it's just up to the manse, but I'm thankfu' to ken of such a gude hame for us among kent folk. 'Better a wee bush than nae bield' [shelter], as the saying is. But it's no' wee either; it's just real nice."

Mr. Barrie's return was awaited by the folks of Blinkbonny with mingled feelings, uppermost being anxiety about his worldly prospects. They were hardly prepared for the Disruption; and when it was known that Mr. Barrie had separated himself from the Church of Scotland, and consequently from his only source of income hitherto, they spoke of it as a serious matter, a very serious matter. It looked a rash step, and his friends felt more than they said, for the thought of his family's future support pressed heavily on their hearts, and made them silent and solemn. He reached home on Thursday afternoon, and felt at a loss how to act. A few of his elders and friends had held informal meetings on the subject, but these were unsatisfactory, because every one had nearly the same want of opinion. "We really do not know what to do;" "What can we do?" was all they could say, followed by a shaking of heads and puzzled looks at each other. When they learned that Mr. Barrie had arrived, they debated whether to wait for *him* to propose a meeting, or to go direct to himself. The majority recommended that some of their

number should call at the manse; but each wished his neighbour to go, and all were reluctant.

At length Mr. Taylor, a worthy elder and a sterling man, said: "Friends, it will never do to back out this way. It is unkind to Mr. Barrie, and not creditable to ourselves. If three or four of you will join me," and looking round the company, he nodded to each as he named,—"say Mr. Smith, and Mr. Watson, and Mr. Brown, and Mr. Martin, —we will offer to call for him to-night."

This met with universal approval, and a letter was sent to let Mr. Barrie know that some friends would wait on him about seven o'clock, if convenient. His reply was cordial and touching. It conveyed his heartfelt thanks for "the prompt kindness that so thoughtfully provided for him the earliest possible opportunity of explaining his position, and of conferring with them on the important events of the past week," and expressed the pleasure he would have in welcoming all who could conveniently come, whether they approved of the step he had taken or not.

This letter removed the objection which many felt about going to the manse, and the company filled the dining-room. We expected to find Mr. Barrie dejected and downcast, and were surprised to find him not only cheerful, but more demonstrative in his heartiness than usual. How to introduce the matter had puzzled the deputation. This was not needed. Mr. Barrie very fully, but in moderate language, stated the case as between the Free Church, the Government, and the ministers who still adhered to the Established Church, making it appear very different to me from what Sir John had made it. None of us had ever seen him so animated as he was when giving an account of the meeting of Assembly from which, after the Protest and Declaration was made, hundreds of ministers walked out for conscience' sake; the perplexed look of the remaining members of Assembly; the awe-struck, solemn silence of the crowd as the line of reverend and grave men became longer and yet longer; the tumult of joy and sorrow as they crowded into Tanfield Hall; the reception they got from ministers of other denominations and the Christian public. As, however, these are fully described in the

chronicles or annals of the times, I shall not repeat them here, but would commend the subject to the attention of the student of history, and of the Scotch people, whichever side of the questions in dispute they may favour.

After laying the facts fully before us, Mr. Barrie with great earnestness said, "I wish no one to join the Free Church, for"—here he hesitated, and looked as if debating something with himself, then resumed, "for—for—well, excuse me for using the term, for my sake. I wish every individual to act only on distinct conviction; if I know myself at all, I consider the right of private judgment in such matters such a sacred thing, that I shall respect those who, on conviction, differ from me as highly as I will those who go along with me on this question. And now, Christian friends, I leave the matter in your hands. Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds."

A long, impressive silence followed Mr. Barrie's remarks. The deputation looked down, then up, then at each other. At length Mr. Taylor said: "Gentlemen, ye've heard Mr. Barrie—I can answer for myself—with great satisfaction. I've been reading the *Merqry*" (an Edinburgh paper called the *Caledonian Mercury*) "and the *Scotsman* on this matter —thanks to Mr. Smith for it. I've mair time for readin' than I once had, and I never was prouder o' my country than when I read that fully four hunder ministers had courage enough, and faith enough, and principle enough, to leave the Established Kirk when they saw that her birthricht was wrested frae her by the sec'lar power, and their own consciences scandalees'd by open defiance of the fundamental principles of the Christian economy. I needna tell you, gentlemen, that this leaving o' the Kirk means loss o' house, and ha', and way o' livin', or stipend as it's ca'd; an' nae doubt there's a sair heart in mony a minister's breast, when he thinks o' his family and them that depends on him. And nae wonder, for in that respect it's a step in the dark, —a' the eerier that he carries his nearest and dearest on his back, and a wrang step might finish them a'." Here Mr. Barrie winced, and emitted a sudden sound as if cold water was being poured on him, which led Mr. Taylor to change his graphic style for one of practical application.

"But no' to detain ye, gentlemen, I for one side wi' the Free Kirk, and will do all in my power to back Mr. Barrie; and I hope and trust that the world 'll see that Scotland hasna' lost the Covenanter's spirit yet, and will countenance what I may ca' the martyrs o' her third Reformation, that have gi'en up sae much for their Maister's sake, and never let them want a 'competent portion of the good things of this life.' 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.'"

Others expressed themselves to the same effect. The oldest man in the party, George Brown, verging on eighty years of age, a "Nathanael," after a few solemn words, said, "Mr. Barrie and Christian friends, I propose that we renew the Covenant." He made the same proposal in one of the early Assemblies, although his weak voice, and the unexpectedness and inexpediency of the motion, prevented its being taken up.

It was resolved, on Mr. Barrie's suggestion, to call a meeting of the parishioners for Saturday afternoon, so that he might have an opportunity of explaining the "Disruption" fully to all who would meet with him, and to give notice of the meeting throughout the parish, so that there might be a good attendance. Mr. Barrie also stated that, as he considered it inexpedient for him to conduct the Sabbath service in the (he called it for the first time) "old" church, he would on the coming Lord's Day preach on the Annie Green, a nice grassy common, with banks sloping upwards in a fairly-sized semicircle, formed by a bend of the burn.

Before we left the manse there was divine service. The daylight having begun to fade, Mr. Barrie proposed that we should sing the 2nd Paraphrase, which we all knew so well as not to need books. When reading it, his voice faltered, and there was not a dry eye, or a throat without a lump in it, during the singing. I give it in full, although it must be familiar to nearly all my readers, leaving them to judge of its singular applicability in the circumstances:

"O God of Bethel! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led:

"Our vows, our pray'rs, we now present
Before thy throne of grace:
God of our fathers! be the God
Of their succeeding race.

"Through each perplexing path of life
Our wand'ring footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.

"O spread thy cov'ring wings around,
Till all our wand'rings cease,
And at our Father's lov'd abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

"Such blessings from thy gracious hand
Our humble pray'rs implore;
And thou shalt be our chosen God,
And portion evermore."

The prayer which followed was impressive and devout, fervent in its cry for light and strength and grace, simple and reverent.

After leaving the manse, the deputation walked slowly down the approach, old George Brown leaning on Mr. Taylor's arm. When we reached the gate opening on the public road, George, who was in front, halted, and when all had gathered round him, he said:

"Freends, I'm an auld man, the auldest o' ye a', and I thank God I've lived to see this day. I've lang mourned o'er the backslidings and defections o' our times, but the Lord has made bare His holy arm. This is the day of His merciful visitation. I'll say to you as Moses said to Joshua, 'Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.' Dinna turn your back in the day of battle, like the sons of Ephraim; dinna abide by the bleatings of the sheep, like Reuben, or remain in ships, like Dan; abune a', dinna provoke the curse of Meroz for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

"Mind, when things werena as they should have been in the days o' Haggai, when men lived in their ceiled houses and let the house o' the Lord lie waste, that they sowed

much but brocht in little, when neither their meat nor their drink nourished them, and even their very claes didna warm them. Their wages were putten into a bag wi' holes, and the Lord blew on what did grow; and the drouth [drought] spoilt their corn, an' wine, an' oil, an' men, an' cattle, an' a' the labour o' their hands; and they had blastin', an' mildew, an' hail. But frae the very day, the four-and-twentieth day o' the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation o' the Lord's temple was laid—frae that very day the Lord blessed them wi' plenty, and scattered their faes and made them as a signet—that I take to be a finger-ring, aye in His sicht. We hae gude reason to believe that the Lord's time to favour Zion has come. He's sitting like a refiner of silver, purifying the sons of Levi. Dinna rob Him in tithes and offerings, or He'll curse us wi' a curse; but oh, my freends, bring a' the tithes into the store-house,—the tithe o' pious hearts and godly zeal, an' prayer, an' brotherly love, an' charity, an' works o' faith, an' labours o' love, and worldly goods—a' the tithes; dinna keep back pairt o' the price, as ye would escape the fate o' Ananias and Sapphira. And if we a' dae our pairt, the Lord will prove true to His promise, an' open the windows o' heaven, and pour out a blessing till there's no room to receive it; and ours will be a delightsome land—no more desolate and forsaken, but Hephzibah and Beulah, which means 'Delighted in,' and 'Married.'"

There was something of the old prophet in the good man as he "lifted up his voice and testified." An interesting conversation followed, in which present duty was discussed, and each resolved to help the good cause. Before leaving the avenue, under the shade of the lime trees which graced its entrance, without previous concert, but as if moved by a simultaneous influence, we uncovered and *looked to* old George. He quite understood the look, and reverently taking off his blue bonnet, he engaged in prayer. His words had the rich unction of Christian experience; they lifted us up for the time until we felt as if inside the audience-chamber; he spoke as one speaks to a father and friend; it was not wrestling, it was more like Hezekiah's spreading out the letter of the Assyrian captain

before the Lord in the temple. The close of the prayer for light and direction was fervent,—that every one of us may ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and do it with all our might, as good soldiers, and good servants, and good stewards. During the prayer was heard an occasional "amen," and there was a unanimous "amen" at its close, a very uncommon thing in such exercises in Scotland.

All had shaken hands with George, and were bidding each other good-bye, when George said:

"My freends, I'm gaun to ask a favour. I am a descendant of John Brown o' Priesthill, the carrier that was shot by Claverhouse. I hae his Bible and Psalm-book, his table and his arm-chair. I wad like them to be used at the Annie Green on Sabbath by Mr. Barrie. They hae served the same purpose wi' Cameron and Peden and MacMillan in the covenantin' times, and I think the blood o' the martyrs is noo quickening the seed of the Church."

"Certainly," was the unanimous reply.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISRUPTION AND BLINKBONNY.

"Long, long be my heart with such memories filled,
As the vase in which roses have once been distilled;
You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Thomas Moore.

NOTICE of the meeting resolved upon in the manse was given in the village and parish, chiefly by one telling another of it; and so effectively was this done, that not a few who had given the day to the work of announcing it, were disappointed at finding the news had preceded them.

Before the hour of assembling there was an unusual bustle in the village even for a Saturday, and all the folks seemed to have on their Sabbath clothes. As soon as the doors of the Beltane Hall, the public hall of Blinkbonny, were opened, a stream of people poured in, leaving scarcely a human being on the streets. Mr. Barrie entered very fully into the history of the "Ten Years' Conflict." He was calm, self-possessed, and impressive. His references to the opposite side were marked by caution and Christian courtesy. When speaking of himself, he did so with great modesty; but he was high in his praise of the leaders of the movement, and of the determined attitude they maintained against all interference with the rights of the Christian people, for these alone constituted the true Christian Church. He pressed upon the attention of all the duty of prayerfully considering the whole question; that they should not be influenced by motives of mere human friendship or partiality or partisanship, but should bring the light of Scripture and

conscience to bear on the path of duty, and walk in it and along it through good report and through bad report.

Before concluding, he thanked his hearers for their presence and manifest attention to his statement, and most touchingly for all their loving kindnesses to himself: "As the minister of the Established Church of Blinkbonny I must now bid you 'Farewell,' but I fervently add the prayer, 'The God of peace be with you.' By whatever distinctive names the Churches to which we shall henceforth belong may be called, may we all be members of the 'Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life,' and be found in Him here, complete in Him, and for ever with Him yonder; and as 'we have this hope in us, let us, as far as we are agreed, walk by the same rule, mind the same thing, and live at peace one with another.'"

He also stated that he did not feel himself at liberty to occupy his old pulpit next day; and, as far as he knew, no one had been appointed to supply it; but he would preach on the Green by the burn-side at the usual hour in the forenoon, and at six o'clock in the evening, and hoped his *former* (with a slight hesitation on his part, and a responsive sigh from the meeting) congregation would attend the services, and not be deterred by the fear that their presence might be looked upon as committing them to his views of the Church question. No such conclusion would be drawn. He would endeavour by God's help to preach the gospel. Let them come to hear *it*, not him. He also expressed a willingness to answer any questions, or give further explanations, or confer with any who might prefer a private interview.

There was a long, solemn silence; at length old George Brown rose and said: "My friends, it's Saturday nicht. Mr. Barrie's haen a sair week, an' doubtless mony o' ye hae come here this day upon account o' the occasion, when, but for it, ye wad hae been at hame at your proper duties; and ye'll a' hae to get things weel forrit [forward] in your hames so as to get to ordinances the morn; so I think we'll be maist in the way o' our duty if we dismiss now, an' think weel aboot what we've heard, and meditate upon it." Then looking round the audience, he asked, "What say you,

my friends?" There being no reply, George looked to Mr. Barrie, and said, "I think, sir, ye should just conclude wi' praise and prayer; and if I may venture, I would say, gie oot the Forty-third Psalm from the third verse. If we all sing the first four lines frae the *heart*, there will be a time o' refreshin' the morn.

> 'O send thy light forth and thy truth;
> Let them be guides to me,
> And bring me to thine holy hill,
> Ev'n where thy dwellings be.'"

George lived by himself, and was unmarried. He was in the constant practice of making worship aloud and alone, first reading each verse singly and then singing it. He, without waiting for Mr. Barrie "giein' out" the psalm, and as if quite forgetful of his presence, started to sing it to the tune called "Bedford," in which the audience very heartily joined. At the close of the first verse, George held up one hand to enjoin silence, and repeated in singing tone on one key the next verse,—what my elderly readers will remember as "reading the line,"—which was then sung, and so on to the end of the psalm. George was about to close his eyes for the concluding prayer, after having made a slight bow to Mr. Barrie; but Mr. Barrie said, "Lead our devotions, if you please, Mr. Brown;" and the old man did this so as to make every heart thrill, many strong men sob, and all the women cry. I was too much agitated to be able to follow him closely, and am ashamed to confess that what I can best recall is not the most impressive or solemn part, but rather a bit memorable for its quaintness as a specimen of the prayers of the old worthies of former days: "That all who on the coming Sabbath assemble in the courts of Thy house may be delivered from formality, and legality, and carnality, purged from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; . . . and all Thy sent servants may be ministers of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man, and may be as the he-goats before the flocks."

After Mr. Barrie pronounced the benediction, the audience seemed unwilling to break up. At length old George stepped forward, and taking Mr. Barrie's hand, wished him the

blessing wherewith Jacob blessed Joseph (Genesis, forty-ninth chapter, from the twenty-second verse to the twenty-sixth): "Unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren." This proved contagious: every one shook hands with Mr. Barrie. Bell, who had been trying to keep concealed during the meeting, lingered in a corner of the hall, struggling between her natural bashfulness and a yearning desire to testify her strong sympathy. Mr. Barrie moved towards her, she started forwards: neither had dry eyes, the grasp was spasmodic but intensely expressive. Mr. Barrie sank into a chair, and was "human."

Bell broke down before reaching the street, and sobbed bitterly, but kept saying between the sobs, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance;—the bush burning but not consumed;—the five loaves and the two small fishes."

Everybody that could get near old George Brown was shaking his horny hands. He overheard Bell saying, "It is good for us to be here." George knew her well, and taking her by the hand he said, "Yes, Bell, 'deed is't. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab." Then looking heavenwards: "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies—or, as it's in the margin, Mahanaim, the place where the angels met Jacob on his way back to Canaan, and Jacob said, 'This is God's host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.'"

One subject filled every heart on the homeward way. Little was said; they mused, and the fire burned.

Sabbath morning brought promise of a lovely summer day, and the promise was not belied. Gavin Sinclair, or "Guy," now the full beadle, sexton, bellman, and minister's man of Blinkbonny, was in a state of great perplexity. Annie Gawdie, who cleaned the church, had told him that just as she was leaving on Saturday night, everybody came "troopin' into the kirk to take awa' their books, an' spoke o' coming on Monday to take away their cushions and stools; they hae made a bonnie mess o' my bonnie clean

kirk, and when I quarrelled them for it, they said the kirk wasna to be in the morn, but Mr. Barrie was to preach on the Annie Green."

Guy had not gone to the Saturday meeting. He was a cautious man, and "didna think it becomes the like o' me, being a man in a kind of a public capacity, to meddle wi' kirk quarrels; for although Mr. Barrie micht leave the kirk,—the mair's the pity, for we'll no' soon get ane like him, if ever,—there was the kirkyard. Ane didna ken how soon they micht hae to break the grund for some death or anither in the parish. I dinna want to gi'e offence to ony side—I maun look to myself an' my family."

Guy's difficulty was whether to ring the bell for service or not. He always rang it at ten o'clock, and would do that as usual,—"That wasna the bell for gaun to the kirk—it was just to let folk ken the richt time to set their clocks by." His "swither" was about ringing the bell for calling the folk to the kirk at the usual time. If, as he had heard, there "was to be no sermon in the kirk, what for should he ring the bell? Then, on the ither hand, what business had he to stop the ringing o' the bell without orders? and wha was to direct him? Would he ask Mr. Barrie, or the schoolmaster, who was session-clerk? He never did that before, and it would look officious." So he resolved to go on as usual. He rang the bell at ten o'clock, and sauntered, as was his wont, to the manse to ask if there were any orders for him, such as to make preparations for a baptism; but instead of going into the kitchen, he hovered about the door till Bell observed him. Bell was full of activity to get everything about the house into order, so that she might go to the service on the Annie Green, and had forgotten about Guy's regular call. Both were perplexed. Guy muttered, he wondered if there "would be ony orders for him the day —she micht ask the minister—if—if he—if he had ony—ony special—" Then a happy idea seemed to strike him, and he got out—"onything to get ready before bell-time?"

Bell took in the situation at once, but had not time to master it. Generally the pulpit Bible and Psalm-book were put on the parlour table on Sabbath mornings, ready for Guy, and Bell got instructions about anything specially

wanted. They were not there this morning, but in the study, which Bell never entered before church time. She asked Mrs. Barrie, who answered that there could be nothing. Bell lingering, said in a distant tone, "I think, mem, that Guy disna ken whether to ring the bell at kirk-time or no'."

Mrs. Barrie hesitated whether or not to disturb Mr. Barrie, then said, "Tell Guy to please himself; Mr. Barrie left no orders, and I cannot disturb him at present, but will ask him at half-past eleven, and let Guy know what he says."

At half-past eleven, as usual, Mrs. Barrie tapped at the study door, and said, "Now, my dear." When Mr. Barrie came out, she asked him about the bell, lifting at the same time the simple Geneva pulpit gown worn by Presbyterian ministers, to help on with it. Mr. Barrie did not turn and stoop as usual to have the robe of office put on, but kept saying,

"Bell?—ring the bell?—I have not thought of that. What do you think, Mary?"

Mrs. Barrie said she told Guy to do as he thought fit, unless he got other instructions,—"the best thing that could have been done in the circumstances."

Guy rang the bell as usual, and got a neighbour to tell those who came to church that the service was to be on the Annie Green. The herald, however, had little to do. A few slipped quietly into the church for their pew Bibles; some paid their weekly visit to the graves of their loved ones around the church; but the stream was towards the Annie Green. About a dozen persons stood round the church door when the bell ceased; the stream had passed; not a straggler was in the churchyard. After waiting a few minutes the shepherdless sheep dispersed; some to the Annie Green, others moodily and wonderingly homewards.

I had arranged with George Brown to have his ancestor's chair, table, and books brought to my house on Saturday evening, and persuaded him to stay with me till Monday. I also told Mr. Barrie about them, and the incident pleased and touched him not a little. All available forms, chairs, and seats were brought by willing hands to the Annie Green

early in the forenoon. The Priesthill relics were placed nearest the burn, the forms and chairs in front, and the dry grassy braes of the burn, which at the place had the form of an irregular half-circle sloping gently upwards, afforded comfortable room for a large congregation.

Long before the hour of meeting, the country folks began to come in, going from "strength to strength." Many lingered about the old church and churchyard, and on the road or sward leading to the place of meeting. Mr. Barrie left the manse in time to walk leisurely. His plain black Geneva gown, his handsome figure, his

> "Aspect manly, grave, and sage,
> As on king's errand come,"

gave solemnity to the scene. Mrs. Barrie leant on his arm. Each led one of the younger children by the hand, while Bell followed with the two older ones. As they entered the avenue, the word, "There he is—there they are," passed from lip to lip; when they came to the public road, and as they walked along it, the people stepped aside and stood hat in hand till they passed, then falling in behind, formed an irregular procession to the Green. All who had already gathered there rose up and uncovered as Mr. Barrie appeared. When the audience was seated or settled, he began the service by reading the 125th Psalm, in a firm, clear voice. The braes of the burn, the glen, the neighbouring woods, and for a considerable distance the country around, heard the sound of grave, sweet melody, rising in volume and intensity as it proceeded. The tune was "St. Andrew's," an old favourite, and said by tradition to be associated in early Scottish Reformation times with the same words:—

> "They in the Lord that firmly trust
> Shall be like Sion hill,
> Which at no time can be remov'd,
> But standeth ever still.
>
> "As round about Jerusalem
> The mountains stand alway,
> The Lord his folk doth compass so,
> From henceforth and for aye."

All the services were impressive, but I will not attempt to detail them. The text was "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." In the opinion of all, it was the best sermon they had ever heard from him. George Brown was delighted with it—characterised it as "a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;" and all the more so that Mr. Barrie's practice had hitherto been to have his carefully prepared manuscript before him when preaching, and to use it occasionally, while on this occasion all that he had was the open Priesthill Bible. The only objection that George ever had to Mr. Barrie was that he used "the paper;" read sermons were, according to his ideas, neither good for minister nor people. To-day there was nothing to mar the old saint's full enjoyment of the worship. The concluding song of Zion was sung with even more enthusiasm—Paraphrase 48th, verses 6–9, the tune "Montrose," sometimes called "The Burghers' Rant." I give it in full, as I did that sung in the manse, and my readers can imagine the vigour with which such words were sung in such a meeting at such a crisis:—

"Who then can e'er divide us more
From Jesus and his love,
Or break the sacred chain that binds
The earth to heav'n above?

"Let troubles rise, and terrors frown,
And days of darkness fall;
Through him all dangers we'll defy,
And more than conquer all.

"Nor death nor life, nor earth nor hell,
Nor time's destroying sway,
Can e'er efface us from his heart,
Or make his love decay.

"Each future period that will bless,
As it has bless'd the past;
He lov'd us from the first of time,
He loves us to the last."

Not the least surprising of the forenoon's incidents was the amount of the collection. It had been debated whether any should be made on the occasion, but Mr. Taylor was

most determined to have one. "Bring an offering with you," said he, "is as plain a command as, Come into His courts;" and he undertook to provide, and to stand at "*the plates*," which were placed just inside the gate of the Annie Green. The result surprised Mr. Taylor. I have since learned that many borrowed of their neighbours, and the amount put in as the congregation retired was larger than that as they entered. The sum was £29, 13s. 3d.

George, of course, dined with us, also a few country friends who wished to attend the evening service. I had been struck with the worn appearance of the knees of George's clothes compared with the fresh "nap" on other parts; but I observed that, when asking a blessing before food, or returning thanks after it, he rubbed his hands firmly over his knees, moving his body backwards and forwards, and speaking louder as he began the forward motion. His exercises were longer than are usual in such cases, and I found on further acquaintance with him that they were stereotyped, generally containing, "May we go up through the wilderness of this world, leaning on the staff of Him who is the beloved of our souls. May we sit under His shadow with great delight, and find His fruit sweet unto our taste. Bless and sanctify all Thy ways and dealings towards us," etc. When remarking on the sermon, he also rubbed his knees, and discoursed rather than conversed about it.

The evening service was more largely attended than that in the forenoon. The burst of music as the 46th Psalm was being sung was overpowering:—

> "God is our refuge and our strength,
> In straits a present aid," etc.

Mr. Barrie's text was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It was a grand sermon, suitable for all times. At the close, in a few moderately worded sentences, he referred to the special circumstances under which they had met, and stated that they would meet in the same place next Sabbath, the first Sabbath of June, the anniversary of the battle of Drumclog. He waxed eloquent as he held up John Brown of Priesthill's Bible, and referred to the other

relics before him, until the audience felt the martyr spirit, and were sorry that he stopped so soon.

I have already referred to the service of praise of the day, and will only add that the singing of the concluding psalm —cxxii., verses 6–9, to the tune of "St. Paul's"—

> "Pray that Jerusalem may have
> Peace and felicity;
> Let them that love thee and thy peace
> Have still prosperity"—

was magnificent. The evening collection made the day's offering amount altogether to over £38. I have dwelt at more length than I intended on this day's proceedings, but it was a great event for a little place. Very possibly I have overdrawn the picture; but had my readers mingled with the companies of worshippers as they walked homewards, they would have heard Mr. Barrie's oldest hearers say "he never preached like that in his life before," and strangers "they had no idea Mr. Barrie was a man of such great ability,—the best sermon they had ever heard,—it is a wonder he has been allowed to remain so long in Blinkbonny."

The attendance at the Annie Green on the first Sabbath of June was as large as on the previous Sabbath, and the services had special reference to the struggles of the Covenanters and the battle of Drumclog. Old George Brown was highly delighted. "I have often," said he, "spoken to Mr. Barrie about saying ower little about thae Cath'lics, and that he should raise his testimony against Prelacy and Popery; but he aye said that, even if he was speakin' to Cath'lics, he wad preach the plain gospel, an' no' scare them away by denouncin' either them or their system, or settin' them against the truth by not speakin' it in love; and for his ain people, it would 'minister questions rather than godly edifying,' as he thocht that runnin' doon the Cath'lics was apt to make folk think, because they werena Cath'lics, that they were a' richt, an' to beget spiritual pride. An' he wasna far wrang. But his subject led him *on* the day, and I was uncommon pleased to hear him speak as he did o' the auld worthies, Knox and Melville, and Cameron

an' Peden, and my forebear Brown, an' let this backslidin', wordly-minded generation ken hoo far behint their ancestors they were in courage an' piety, in thocht, an' word, an' deed."

There was a congregation of the United Secession, now the United Presbyterian, Church in Blinkbonny, and Mr. Morrison, the minister, and his session had generously offered to accommodate the Free Church, as far as lay in their power, with the use of their church, as the largest hall in the village was too small for the congregation. Mr. Morrison was a diligent student, conscientious and minute in his preparations for the pulpit: he wrote these carefully out, and spent the last two days of the week in committing them to memory. He was an estimable man, an excellent scholar, had been a great reader, and was well versed in general science; but he had an affluence of words, and a Johnsonian style of composition which injured him as a preacher. His matter was good, sound, unexceptionable, but his manner of conveying it was verbose, often a mere recasting of the grand old English of the Bible into a laboured and profuse style of expression. He seldom used the terse old Saxon words if he could get words of grander sound derived from another language, but used "plenitude" instead of "fulness," "capacitate" for "fit," and "salubrious" for "healthy." His voice was good, but the long, involved sentences made it appear monotonous, and justified the critique of old Robert Gunn: "Vera gude matter, nae doubt, but tedious, a wee tedious. He has lang 'heids,' [divisions of a sermon], and disna aye gi'e them ower again in the same words, which fickles [puzzles] the young folk that have to tell the 'heids an' particulars' when they gang hame; for if, as is very often the case, the first 'heid' is, 'The persons mentioned in the text,' we are almost sure to hear when he's done with it, 'Having thus considered, in the first place, the individuals to whom reference is made in the deeply interesting and highly instructive passage which I have selected as the subject of this morning's exposition,' which is baith confusin' an' tedious."

The services in the "Meetin'-house," the local name of the Secession Church, occupied without interval fully three

hours, and included a lecture and a sermon of at least an hour each. In order to suit the Free Church, these were begun at ten o'clock, and ours at one. This put Mr. Morrison to the serious and difficult task of condensing his services. For the first two Sabbaths he did not succeed. As it was he who *proposed* that the Free Church should meet at one o'clock, he was taken to task by his session and several of his people on the subject. Robert Gunn, a forward "body," had suggested the means: "Just dicht [sift] yer corn better, and leave less chaff in't."

On the third Sabbath he got through in about two hours and a half, and kept thereafter rather within that limit, although not without having often to say, "Did time permit, I would have proceeded," etc., or, "The brief space of time at my disposal prevents me from entering on the full illustration of my next head, but I may say in a word—." That was an ominous expression, and the result often proved it an inconsistent one, as the "word," or "one word more," seldom occupied less than fifteen minutes. "Lastly, and very briefly," was another term contradicted by the sequel.

The shorter service was a comfortable change for those whose uneasy task it was to keep their children "behaving themselves" in the church. James Spence, whose regular remark to his neighbours on the road home had been, "He said a great deal, really he said a very great deal," gave as his opinion that "he really thocht that there was less skailt noo that the kirk skailed sooner [there was less spilt now that the church was dismissed sooner], for even yet there was a great deal said that we couldna carry home, and mair that we didna carry oot; and wi' the bairns no' bein' sae fashious through no' bein' sae lang in, we could attend better."

The Free Church services in the Meeting-house were well attended. Many of the Seceders worshipped with us, and confessed with shame that their sectarian bitterness towards the principle of a Church Establishment had extended to its ministers, on whom they had looked uncharitably as "Samaritans," with whom they could have no dealings, and they were surprised to find Mr. Barrie so

excellent. Maggie Gunn told her father "that yon minister preached as well as Mr. Morrison, only far better." Mr. Barrie became a favourite with them; although, to the honour of all parties be it told, that no one left the Secession to join the Free Church on that account. Between Mr. Morrison and him, as well as between the office-bearers and congregations, there existed the most cordial relationships, and the interchange of pleasant communion and fellowship. I look back with so much pleasure and gratitude to the sympathy and help we got, in the beginning of our way, from our Secession friends, that I fear I have been, to use Robert Gunn's phrase, "a wee tedious."

Mr. Walker of Middlemoor was Mr. Barrie's successor in the parish of Blinkbonny. In making application to Sir John M'Lelland for the living, he was bluntly honest in telling his motives, viz. that the stipend was larger, and the manse and glebe better; that his family were growing up, and he would like to get settled in a place in which he could get openings for the older ones, schooling for the younger ones, and where all could come home at night; and he would be very much obliged to Sir John if he would present him to Blinkbonny. He was presented and inducted in due form and time.

Mr. Walker was a kind-hearted, stout, canny man, of moderate abilities as a scholar and preacher. His parish of Middlemoor was a small one, in a pastoral and moorland district, thinly peopled. It had a large glebe of indifferent land, which he cultivated diligently to eke out his small stipend. He was quite as good a farmer as a preacher, and had, on Mr. Barrie's suggestion, been Bell's adviser in the purchase or sale of cows, sheep, or pigs. Even on the subject of poultry he was at home, and even made his son keep a "hen journal," partly as a lesson in book-keeping, and partly as a practical application of the inspired proverb, which was often in his mouth, "Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."

He was a frequent visitor at Mr. Barrie's, an occasional "assistant" at the October communion services, and a regular member of the "thanksgiving" dinner-party in the manse on the Monday thereafter. He was a man of peace,

and took little interest in the Voluntary, Disruption, or other controversies; when these formed the subject of after-dinner discussion, he left the dining-room, and quietly betook himself to the kitchen with his pipe, for he was an inveterate smoker.

He looked relieved as he entered the kitchen; said, "Well, Bell;" dropt heavily into the arm-chair which stood at the fireside (the arms of which were barely wide enough to admit him, but yielded with a creak, and he dropt in, but had to press them firmly down before getting out); took out his pipe—generally a short black one; knocked out the "dottle" (the crisp remains of a former smoke) on the hob-plate; tried if it would draw, and if not, cleared the bowl with the point of his knife, and if that failed, asked Bell for a stalk of lavender. When the pipe was cleared to his mind, he slowly cut some thin slices from a roll of twist tobacco, rubbed the fragments between his hands, filled his pipe, put on the "dottle," and applied the "spunk," from which Bell had broken off the sulphur tip. All these operations and details were done with very great deliberation and in grave silence, with the exception of asking the lavender stalk, which was only resorted to after the knife and the repeated blowings from the bowl and shank ends of the pipe had failed; after it was fairly lighted and going well, he began an intermittent, congenial crack.

Tobacco smoke Bell could not endure. No other person would have been permitted to pollute her kitchen with it, and as a general rule she got Mr. Walker to combine his inspection of the garden and glebe with "enjoyin' his smoke." As this dinner-day came round she had to submit, and provided against it by removing hams and things of that sort, that they might not be "scomfished," then set herself to enjoy the leisurely preparations, and respect the silence with which they were conducted, as the after-crack was sure to be quite to her mind.

At the last October dinner, after a few soothing whiffs, Mr. Walker began the colloquy with, "Bell, I'm glad to get away from these discussions about the Kirk; I cannot bear them. I like better to talk about live stock. How are yours doing?"

Bell entered heartily into an account of her year's farming. Mr. Walker listened approvingly, and in return told about his crops and herds, and what the "mairt" (the animal which had been killed and salted for winter use) had weighed, and how the hens, bees, and other stock had done—alternately speaking and smoking. I cannot give the interview in detail, but both agreed they had had a grand crack—better than ony kirk quarrels.

It was from the following story, which Mr. Walker then told, that Bell first heard of the Church "question;" but his way of putting it was so conclusive to Bell, that she thought no more on the subject until the matter of the seed-potatoes brought it home to herself.

A lady from Leith had come to reside in Middlemoor, and had said to the farmer of Hillend, who had accosted her with, "Weel, mem, hoo d'ye like to live in this moorland country?"

"Very much indeed, it is a delightful place! If I had only my own doctor and my own minister, I would stay here the whole year through; but your country doctors are not quite—quite—well—well enough in their way, but not *quite* like the town doctors; and your ministers are *very* nice—" This she said in a hesitating undertone, not expressive of hearty concurrence, and ended in a firmer voice, "but not like my own."

"'Deed, mem," said Hillend, "gi'e us farmers a gude miller an' a gude smith, an' we can do weel enough wi' ony ministers or doctors that likes to come."

"That wasna bad for Hillend," said Bell.

"Well, Bell," said Mr. Walker, "I thought it rather hard on the ministers when I first heard the story, but—" He then gave his views of the Non-Intrusionists with, for him, unusual fervour, and added, "*Now*, I quite agree with Hillend, that congregations should accept, and welcome, and honour the ministers who are appointed over them."

"That's without a doubt," said Bell; "and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

The news of Mr. Walker's appointment to Blinkbonny was received first with a stare, then a shrug of the shoulders,

then a pretty general feeling that "they might have had worse." He was certainly not a shining light, but he was a nice man, had a large family, and it would be a good change for them. Although the local poetaster circulated a sorry effusion on the subject, in which he, without acknowledgment, stole from Cowper's "Needless Alarm,"—

> "A mutton statelier than the rest,"—

and—

> "His loving mate and true,
> But more discreet than he, a *Moorland* ewe,"—

changing the original "Cambrian" to "Moorland," it did not take; and Blinkbonny, on its personal and social and "soft" side, was ready to "entertain" Mr. Walker.

He carried the news of his own appointment to the manse, and although it surprised Mr. Barrie for a moment, he heartily wished him every success and comfort, adding that the manse would be at his service by the time he was inducted. Mr. Walker assured Mr. Barrie there was no hurry, as "he did not see that they could possibly come in until after harvest was past at Middlemoor."

When Bell heard that Mr. Walker was to succeed Mr. Barrie, she forgot her usual good manners. "Mr. Walker! —Walker o' Middlemoor!—fat Walker 's gotten the kirk, has he? He's a slow coach—pity the folk that gangs to hear him; but 'deed they'll no' mony gang. He minds me o' Cauldwell's speech at the cattle show. After Sir John palavered away about the grand stock, and praised Cauldwell for gettin' sae mony prizes, the decent man just said, 'Sir John and gentlemen, thank ye a' kindly. I'm nae hand o' makin' a speech. I may be a man among sheep, but I'm a sheep among men.'" And Bell showed how changeable human affections are; for although Mr. Walker and she had been hand-and-glove friends, she summed up with, "Mr. Walker will never fill Mr. Barrie's shoon [shoes]. I never could thole [endure] him an' his filthy tobacco smoke. Ugh! ma puir kitchen will sune be in a bonny mess; an' I dinna ken what to think about the things in the garden an' outhouses that are *ours*, for, as

Mrs. Walker ance said to me, her motto was, 'Count like Jews and 'gree like brithers.'"

But when the settling up came, Bell found Mrs. Walker "easy dealt wi',"—not only satisfied with her valuation, but very complimentary as to the state in which everything was left, and very agreeable—very.

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF THE OLD HOME INTO THE NEW.

"Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
An' bear ye a' life's changes wi' a calm an' tranquil mind;
Though press'd an' hemm'd on every side, ha'e faith an' ye'll win through,
For ilka blade o' grass keps its ain drap o' dew."

James Ballantine.

MR. BARRIE wrote Sir John M'Lelland, thanking him for his uniform kindness, and stating that he had disjoined himself from the Established Church. He also wrote the clerk of his presbytery to the same effect, adding that he would leave the manse as soon as possible.

A short time sufficed to put Knowe Park into habitable order. When this was known, Mr. Barrie was cumbered by proffers of help from the farmers of the parish. He could have had fifty carts to remove his furniture for one that was required; and acts or offers of considerate attention were so showered upon him that he felt embarrassed.

At length the day came for "flitting." It was a fine morning in the middle of summer,—everything was looking its best. In itself the manse was a charming place. To Mr. and Mrs. Barrie and their children it had been a happy home, and in their inmost hearts it was hallowed by many tender associations. The church was endeared to Mr. Barrie as he recalled the pleasant meetings held in it with his beloved flock. Leaving them was a bitter ordeal, trying to flesh and blood, and they felt it very keenly.

At the hour for morning family worship, the men who were taking down and loading the furniture were asked to

come to the "books." They told afterwards that in singing the 23rd Psalm their voices quivered, and they felt a lump in their throats as the 138th Psalm was read, the "*ordinary*" for the morning,—for the circumstances seemed to give additional meaning to such expressions as—"strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," "though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me," "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," "forsake not the works of Thine own hands."

As soon as the first cartload was off, Bell went to Knowe Park to get things put rightly in and up. The three elder children had resolved to flit their own belongings. James took his small barrow, filled with a confused load of skates, books, etc. Mary carried her little chair, Black Tam the negro doll, and some books and toys; Lewie his little chair, a toy horse, and a whip. They had reached the post office (which stood a little back from the main street), and were resting on the broad open pavement in front of it, James sitting on his barrow, the others in their chairs.

Dr. Guthrie, who had been spending a day or two in the neighbourhood, called at the post office. When his kindly eye rested on the singular group, his face became radiant with a smile such as *he* could give, and which the children frankly returned. Going close to them, he stooped and patted Mary's cheek, put his hand under her chin and stroked it playfully, all the while looking kindly in her face; then glancing at the treasures in her lap, he asked:

"What is the name of that fine doll, my wee pet? is it Sambo, or Pompey, or what?"

"That's Black Tam," said Mary. "It was Nellie's doll, and I'm taking it to our new house."

"Nellie's, was it? And is Nellie too old for dolls now, and has she given it to you? He looks as if he had seen better days."

"Oh! please, sir, Nellie's dead," said Mary, looking towards the churchyard; "she's buried over there."

"But Bell and mamma say that Nellie is in heaven," said Lewie very decidedly.

The suddenness and beauty of Lewie's answer strongly

affected Dr. Guthrie. Pulling out his snuff-box, and taking a moderate pinch, he clapped Lewie's head, and said:

"Yes, my wee man, you're right; Nellie's in heaven. But what's your name?"

James now took speech in hand: "My name's James Barrie, and this is Mary, and this is Lewie. We're flitting from the manse over yonder;" and he pointed in the same direction as Mary had looked. Dr. Guthrie, thus suddenly brought into contact with this stern reality of the Disruption, again applied to his snuff-box, and was in the act of opening it when Sir John M'Lelland drove up to the post office and alighted. Dr. Guthrie and he knew each other as members of Assembly, and shook hands cordially, Sir John expressing suprise at finding the doctor there.

"Sir John," said the doctor, "excuse me,"—as he dried the tear that was coursing down his cheek,—"do you know these children?"

"I do," said Sir John, "they are Mr. Barrie's children;" then addressing James, asked, "How are mamma and papa?"

The children rose, and the boys took off their caps when Sir John appeared. In answer to the question James said: "They're quite well, thank you, sir; we're all going to our new house to-day; *we're* helping to flit."

Dr. Guthrie looked first at Sir John, then at the children, and swinging his hand so that it pointed first to the children, then to the manse, and resting it now towards them and again towards it, he recited with much feeling, for he was deeply moved:

> "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
> This makes her loved at home, revered abroad;
> Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
> An honest man's the noblest work of God."

By this time several of the villagers were attracted to the scene, and could scarcely repress the cheer that was strggling for vent in their throats. Respect for Sir John, however, kept it down until he drove away, when a right hearty greeting was given to Dr. Guthrie, in whose eyes the tear still trembled, and many pressed forward to grasp his

hand,—none more warmly than Kennedy the tailor, who, producing his snuff-mull, said:

"Ye'll excuse me, sir; I dinna ken ye, but—ye'll excuse me, sir—but would ye do me the honour of takin' a snuff out of my box?"

"Certainly, my good friend," said the doctor; "and we'll giff-gaff," handing his box to the tailor, and helping himself out of Kennedy's dimpled, black, oval-shaped tin mull.

The tailor took a pinch from the doctor's mull, called it a "braw box" and "prime snuff," and added, "Burns was a great poet, and that was a grand verse you recited the noo, and the occasion is worthy o't. Mr. Barrie is an honest man, but he is far mair, he's a patriot-martyr," as Dr. Guthrie walked off.

The last cartload had left the manse; there was nothing for Mr. and Mrs. Barrie to do but lock the door and follow. They paid a farewell visit to each room. Their footsteps sounded harshly through the house, now empty and dreary, still they were loth to leave. When fairly outside they lingered on the front door step; then Mr. Barrie, with a quick "This will never do," locked the door and withdrew the key.

While bracing themselves for their trying walk past the church, past the churchyard, and through the village, a noise, a familiar noise, yet with an eerie wail in it, made both start. It came from old Tibby the cat—Nellie's Tibby. Bell had carried her in a basket to Knowe Park as carefully as if she had been Nellie herself, and shut her up in a room. When the children came, James and Mary got strict orders to watch her; but Tibby beat them all and got off, and home, and into some quiet corner of the manse, whence, when the door was locked, she crept out, uttering her wailing protest.

"Poor Tibby!" said Mrs. Barrie, "we must take you with us."

When the door was re-opened, Tibby was easily caught. She had evidently been convinced, after a bewildered ramble through the empty house, that there was good reason for her late transportation and imprisoment.

This little incident re-opened the floodgates of tender

memories, and forced tears from Mrs. Barrie's eyes, although by that time the fountain had been pretty well dried up. She felt thankful to have something else than herself to think of; and Tibby's presence under her arm, tucked cosily into the corner of her shawl, served to divide her attention, and supply a sufficient amount of occupation to make the walk less trying. She leaned heavily on Mr. Barrie's arm, partly from weariness, partly from excitement.

When they reached Knowe Park, Bell had tea ready in the parlour; and the children, having repeatedly made a complete round of the whole premises, gave at the tea-table curious details of what they had discovered in their ramblings over the new home, as well as cheering proofs that they had not lost their appetites.

Bell had the bedrooms into wonderful order for their evening accommodation, and thus kind neighbours were deprived of the pleasure of "putting up" for a few nights some members of the family. After a few days all felt quite at home, and the additional work entailed by making the manse things go as far as they could, kept every one so busy that they were surprised at having got over the flitting, especially the "*leaving*" of the manse, so soon and so quietly.

I did not think it possible that Bell could have wrought harder than I had always known her to do; but she did, and soon Knowe Park was as much to her, as far as the garden and live-stock were concerned, as the old homestead had been. Although Guy the beadle offered to bring from the manse garden whatever she wished, Bell had enough and to spare, and told him to use for himself whatever he liked, and only to sell what was ripe or "near spoiling."

True to his trust, Guy brought Bell a fair sum of money obtained in this way, which she handed to Mr. Barrie, not Mrs. Barrie as usual, telling him how it had come. Guy and Bell were warmly thanked by Mr. Barrie, who was greatly pleased with this evidence of their kind thoughtfulness; but to Bell's astonishment he handed back the money, and said, "Give it to the poor, Bell, and oh! let us be thankful we have something to give away."

As this was very far in advance of Bell's notions of what

was called for, she spoke to her mistress about it. Mrs. Barrie was well aware she required to be very economical, but Mr. Barrie's "thankful we have something to give away" was so like himself, and the money had come so unexpectedly, that she said:

"Certainly, Bell, we'll carry out Mr. Barrie's wishes; and let us be thankful something has thus come that we *can* give, and thereby receive the more blessedness, for it *is* more blessed to give than to receive."

Bell could not quite go in with this doctrine. She thought for a little, and then said hesitatingly:

"Just so, mem; but you'll surely no' object to me selling whatever's to spare at Knowe Park, mem, will ye? I think less o' what comes frae the auld manse; an' I'm aye gaun to ca't that, an' this house is to be the manse. Not the new manse, but *the manse*—THE MANSE."

"Do as you have always done, Bell; no directions I could give would serve you so well as your own good sense. I have been so unsettled by the events of the past two months that I hardly know my own mind; but one thing I do know, and feel—" here Mrs. Barrie's eyes filled, and she finished the sentence with a trembling voice, "and that is, you have been a sister and a mother to us all,—a Deborah and a Ruth, a Martha and a Dorcas put together. May God reward you!"

This was nearly too much for Bell, but the necessity of getting on and getting through was pressing her strongly. She accordingly braced herself up, and said in a cheertul tone:

"Mrs. Barrie, I've gotten ower a' my fears an' cares o' a worldly kind about this kirk business, an' I'm humbled to think that I spoke to you an' the minister an' ithers as I did, an' that I didna join the noble army till after the battle was won; but noo," said she with great solemnity, "I pray that I may mak' up for my faintin' in the day o' adversity by settin' my face like a flint to my wark," and here she lowered her tone. "But I'm forgettin' mysel', an' we maun a' set the stout heart to the stey [steep] brae, an' gather up the loins o' our minds and heads and hands, and no' turn back, like Lot's wife. We're gaun to dae fine here: the

range is very licht on the coals; an' the hens are takin' to the place, an' layin' weel; an' Daisy's up to her knees in clover," and here Bell put on her blithest look, "an' I never saw either Mr. Barrie or you lookin' better. We maunna let it be said that we're 'unsettled,' when in every sense o' the word we're settled, and weel settled,—we couldna be better,—we're just real weel set."

Bell's hearty speech put Mrs. Barrie into good spirits. She left the kitchen with a smile on her lip and a warm thought in her heart, which found expression as she walked through the lobby in "Thank God for Bell!"

Bell was contentedly happy because she was constantly busy, and her schemes prospered. From the day Mr. Barrie had hinted at the possibility of their leaving the manse, she set herself to contrive if by any means she could become more than ever one of the bread-winners, and her first attempt was with the hens. Some one told her about the increased yield of eggs which Sir John's henwife had got by some changes she had made in the food and treatment of her poultry. Bell adopted the new system, and improved on it. She succeeded far beyond her expectations, and with a happy face, told me of her luck when ordering some peppercorns and other spices, with which to experiment still further on a notion of her own.

"I've been trying different plans wi' my hens. I first gied them dry grain, and they did but middlin'; then I gied them rough meal, an' they did better; syne I boiled their meat, an' put a 'curn' [a small quantity] o' spice in't, an' they did splendid—far mair than paid for the extra meat; then I got a cracknel frae the candle-maker (ane o' yon dark, cheese-lookin' things that they make out o' the rinds o' fat, an' skins, an' sic like that comes out o' tallow), and boiled a bit o' it among their meat, and the result was extraordinary; they just laid on an' on till they nearly reduced themselves to skeletons. I was fair affronted to see them about the place, an' I had to gi'e them a rest an' change their victuals. *Now* I try to mix their meat so as to get them baith to lay weel, an' to be size for the table. But ye'll hae seen what grand eggs I've been sending to yoursel', an' how mony mair than before?"

I knew that to be the case, and said so. Bell continued:

"But besides that, early in the spring, I got some settings o' eggs that they say are a grand kind, and the birds are a gude size a'ready. I got them from Dan Corbett, an' so I wadna like to say very muckle about them, for Dan's no' aye to lippen [trust] to. 'Deed, since we've come to live nearer him, I'm no sae high about them, for he has a vermin o' game-cocks about him, and they whiles cross the north park and fecht wi' mine—they're a fair torment."

Dan Corbett was a "queer mixture." He was a native of Blinkbonny, but had been out of the parish for several years; report said he had been a smuggler on the west coast of Scotland. He returned to his native parish about the year 1820, with scars on his face, and without one of his eyes, which gave him a sinister look. Shortly after his return he acted as night-watchman in the churchyard, as the outrageous custom of violating the sanctity of the grave in order to procure subjects for surgical demonstration and actual use in teaching anatomy, had sent a thrill of horror over Scotland, and led to the systematic watching of churchyards by at least two individuals every night. Dan was the paid regular watchman, and one or more respectable householders by turns watched along with him. Dan's reckless character fitted him for the dreary post; and although none of those who watched with him respected him, they found that he was always wakeful, and, in the matter in hand, trustworthy.

When the night watching was given up, Dan maintained himself by doing on a larger scale the odd sorts of jobs which he had sometimes taken in hand in order to add to his salary as watchman, or "dummie doctor," as he was called. My older readers will remember with what feelings of indignation the resurrectionists or dummie doctors (for these were the names given to the violators of the graves) were spoken of, and that after their disappearance the odious name, "dummie doctor," sometimes stuck to the watchman.

Dan acted among the surrounding farmers as butcher, mole-catcher, rat-catcher, and, in a rough way, as a veterinary surgeon; was employed as extra hand at sheep-shearings, corn-threshings, etc. He was a regular attender of local cattle markets, fairs, races, and games; a good and keen

fisher, and strongly suspected of being a poacher, but never convicted. He was a wiry, spare, athletic man of about 5 feet 11 inches high, with a weatherbeaten countenance, thin grizzled hair, and a long stride. He lived in a cottage, divided by a single field from Knowe Park, and kept a perfect menagerie of dogs, ferrets, goats, and fowls—the latter being principally game sorts. Dan's favourite pastime was cock-fighting; but it was, to his great regret, being discountenanced and put down. He had a variety of surnames; the "Corbie," as a contraction of his own name, was the most common, but he was known as the "Mowdie" (mole), the "Rat," the "Doctor," the "Vet," and "Ggemmie," as well as the "Dummie Doctor" or "Dummie."

The eggs he had given to Bell were not from his own stock, but had been given him in exchange; he was occasionally employed by Bell as a butcher, so that there was a trade connection between them, but it was strictly confined to "professional" services, as poor Dan, in the matter of social position or religion, was looked upon as quite an outcast; the description of him, in these respects, ranged from "a poor creature" to "an awfu' man."

Dan had got a setting of eggs from a famous strain of game fowls, and had been loud in laying off their properties to his cronies, some of whom, on the night Dan "set" them, took the eggs carefully from under his hen and put ducks' eggs in their place; they then crossed the field, got into Knowe Park offices, and put Dan's eggs under one of Bell's "clockers" (clucking hens), using every precaution not to injure the eggs, as well as to avoid detection.

Dan waited long and wearily for his expected brood; he looked for them on the reckoned day, but it passed, and the next, and the next, until a full week had elapsed, and still no birds. Early on the eighth morning he determined to "pitch" the eggs away, and was angrily stooping down to lift off the hen, which, although a great favourite and a "splendid sitter," would have had a rough and cruel toss when he heard a cheep.

The welcome sound was marrow to his bones. "Eh!" was his first exclamation; "what's that? is't possible after

a'?" He heard more cheeping. "Isn't it a gude thing I've been sae patient?" Then looking at the hen, which, but a minute before, he was preparing to use very roughly, he said, "Eh, grannie, grannie, ye're the best clocker in the county; eh, my auld darlin', my queen o' beauty, ye'll no' want your handfu' o' groats for this—I'll gi'e ye a peck; jist anither day, grannie, an' ye'll get oot wi' yer darlin's, ye ace o' diements!"

The cheeping had now become very decided, and Dan, again addressing grannie, said, "Sit on, my flower o' the flock, my fail-me-never, hap the giant-killers wi' yer bonnie, golden, cosy feathers just till the nicht, till their wee jackets an' glancin' spurs are dry; an' I'll bring a' the neebors about seven o'clock when they come hame, and I'll open the door, an' ye'll march out like Wallington at the head o' the Scotch Greys at Waterloo; and will they no' stare when they see your sturdy family following ye like the Royal Artillery?"

He then locked the door, and "warned" his cronies and neighbours to come "sharp seven," and they would see something really worth their while.

Dan was in the fidgets all afternoon. Shortly before seven o'clock a small crowd had gathered in his garden, to whom Dan told the pedigree of the chickens, and spoke of their qualities in the most glowing terms.

"Let's see them, Dan," said several voices; "let's see them."

"I'm waiting for Watty," said Dan; and turning to a boy, said, "Gang to the house-end, ma man, an' see if he's no' comin';" then addressing his visitors, he said, "Watty's the only man that I'm feared for in this district; his birds hae beaten mine ower often; I'll tether him noo, or I'm cheated."

As Dan finished this speech, Watty, a queer-looking fellow wearing a hairy skull-cap, smoking a short black pipe, and with both hands in his pockets, joined the gathering. He gave a side nod to Dan, and said "Hoo's a'?" to the company.

"Noo for the show!" said Dan, as he unlocked the hen-house (it was coal-house, goat-house, and served various

other purposes), and flung the door wide open, saying, "Come awa', grannie, wi' your 'royal family.' There's a pictur', men, for ye."

Grannie's family were restless, because hungry and particularly thirsty, and she and they obeyed Dan's summons with great readiness and even haste.

Watty, who had till then smoked on in silence, quickly took the pipe out of his mouth, stooped a little, shaded his eyes with one hand, and seemed sadly puzzled. His first remark was:

"Man, Dan, they've awfu' braid nebs" [broad bills].

"Braid nebs, or no' braid nebs," said Dan, "the game's there onyway."

"May be," said Watty, "but they have maist awfu' braid nebs," for by this time he and all the onlookers had "smelt a rat;" "and in ma opinion they're jucks."

"Ye're a juck!" said Dan, looking at him fiercely.

"Dinna look at me, Dan, look at *them;* look at their nebs, look at their wab-feet—is thae no jucks?"

A second glance revealed to Dan that this was too true.

Roars of laughter, which only such a gathering can give, ensued, in which "Braid nebs," "Gemm jucks," "Grannie's royal family," "Tether Watty," were heard amidst the noisy peals of the uncontrolled and apparently uncontrollable merriment.

Dan looked unutterable things; his face was one of dismal agony. He took side glances at the onlookers; each followed by a long look—a perplexed, vindictive look—at the ducklings; while all the while the crowd waxed merrier, and laughed louder as they saw his miserable, heart-broken countenance.

Watty stooped down to lift a duckling, saying at the same time, "Man, Dan, have ye lost your sicht? Div ye no' see that thae's jucks? Look at their nebs, their feet, their size; hear their weet-weet;" but "Grannie" barred the pass, flew at his hand, and pecked it sharply. This revived the sorely afflicted Dan, and rousing himself, he said, "Weel dune, grannie!" which the crowd received with a cheer and continued laughter.

One of the onlookers, wishing to soothe Dan, said,

"Jucks are as gude as hens ony day, Dan; an' they're healthy-like birds."

"You ignorant gomeral [stupid fellow]! you senseless blockhead! you born idiot!" said Dan, his excitement increasing as he proceeded; "jucks like game-cocks! jucks like the kind o' game-cocks that should ha' been there, that were set by my ain hands! haud yer bletherin' [foolish talking] tongue. Somebody's been puggyin' [playing monkey tricks] me. If I kent wha dared to tak' their nap [mocking jest] aff me, I wad gi'e them what they wad mind a' their days; I would *fell* them!"

A large crowd had now collected in Dan's garden, and when the new-comers heard the cause of the merriment, they joined in it, keeping it up.

"What are ye a' doin' laughin' there at, like heeawnies [hyenas]? Out o' this, every one o' ye, or I'll gar some o' ye laugh on the ither side o' yer lug [ear]!" said Dan, looking daggers.

"Lock them up, Dan, for fear the witches change them into turkeys," said one of the crowd.

This made Dan furious: he seized an old spade which lay on the top of his hen-house, and vowed that he "would *fell* ony man that said another word."

"If ye can catch him," said a waif, with a knowing wink; and he made off as fast as he could.

"If I can what?" said Dan. "I believe you're the vagabond that's puggied me, and I'll catch ye, supple an' a' as ye think ye are!"

Dan started, holding the spade over his head, fury in his eye, vengeance in his heart. The crowd saw that his blood was up, and cried, "Run, run, run for your very life!"

The man got into the field that lay between Dan's cottage and Knowe Park; Dan followed, as did also many of the crowd. The pursued man, repenting of his rashness, and fearing the worst, as well he might, made straight for Knowe Park wall.

Bell had heard the laughter when milking Daisy; Mr. and Mrs. Barrie had heard it when taking an evening stroll in the garden, and all three were standing at the wall wondering what could cause it, as the laughter was un-

usually boisterous. They saw the chase begin. The flying man observed Mr. Barrie, and made toward him as to a city of refuge. When Mr. Barrie saw Dan rushing on, so dangerously armed and so furious, he cried loudly, "Stop, Corbett! stop! I command you."

This made Dan slacken his pace and lower his spade, but he walked sulkily on with the crowd, saying, "I'm no' dune wi' him yet. I'll gi'e him't for this yet.—Wait a wee, just wait a wee," until they came to the wall of the garden.

"Whatever is all this about?" said Mr. Barrie. "What's wrong, Corbett, that you are so furious?"

"A's wrang, sir, a's wrang. I've been rubbit [*i.e.* robbed], an' insulted, an' chagareened by that—" It took Dan a little time to select an epithet strong enough for the occasion, and at the same time fit for the minister's ears. This was a difficult matter; many rushed to his tongue, strong, withering, seasoned; undoubtedly, if Mr. Barrie had not been present, he would have fired them off in a volley, and thereby greatly relieved himself. At length he hurled out, "that unhanged vagabond; he's puggied me, but—"

Mr. Barrie looked at Dan and said, "Stop, Corbett, say no more till your passion cools;" then turning to the crowd he said, "What is the cause of this unseemly uproar?"

Watty and several others began to explain the affair, but every one who attempted this had to stop after saying a word or two; even the offending man, although now quite safe, was unable to get beyond "Dan set hens' eggs" for laughing, and every one in the field was writhing in contortions, through excessive laughter, with the exception of Dan, on whom the boisterous mirth was telling like oil on a flame.

Mr. Barrie looked at Dan, and seeing he was becoming more ferocious, said calmly, "Corbett, from the behaviour of the crowd I suspect they have been playing some trick upon you, and have evidently succeeded to their entire satisfaction, but to your great annoyance. Please tell me really what has excited you."

Dan told his story. The laughter was quite as general, but became more distant as he proceeded, for while speak-

ing he scowled on the "grinning baboons," as he called them, and clutched his spade angrily, thus still further widening the circle. Although Mr. Barrie remained grave, Mrs. Barrie retired a few paces and laughed quietly, while Bell, sheltered by evergreens, chuckled heartily, repeating, "Well, I never!" All at once she stopped, thought a little, then saying to herself, "That explains it," she came close to the wall at the point where Dan stood, and said, "There's a brood o' chickens, lang-leggit, sharp-nebbit things, come to me that I never set; they're maybe yours, they're no' ours—they're come-o'-wills."

"What!" said Dan; "whan did they come out?"

"This day week exactly."

"Let's see them. Come in, Watty, an' gie's your skill o' them," said Dan, with a happier but still nervous face; then addressing himself to Bell he said, "Hoo mony came oot?"

"Eleven out o' thirteen; there were twa eggs did naething."

"That's very gude; that's grand!" said Dan, who was already climbing the wall to get to the brood.

"Had ye no' better wait till the morn's mornin'?" said the considerate Bell. "They're a' shut up for the nicht, an' cosy under their mother's wing; ye'll disturb them, puir things."

"I maun see them the nicht; I'll no' live if I dinna see them the noo, but I'll be real canny wi' them. Come on."

Dan, Watty, and Bell went to the "cavie" or hencoop, folded back the old bag which had been dropt over the front to keep the inmates warm, and Dan saw to his intense delight two little heads peeping from under their feathery covering. His educated, although single, eye at once settled the kind: "Game, game, every inch o' them, and baith cocks!" Then turning to his crony, he said, "Watty, you'll lift the hen canny, canny, an' I'll tak' stock."

The result was "six cocks an' five hens, the real true-blue breed," declared by Dan, and confirmed by Watty, with the addition of, "Dan, ye're rich noo."

Bell would not consent to their being shifted that night and ultimately persuaded Dan to "leave them wi' her hen

till they were pickin' for themselves; she would take care o' them, an' nae cats could get near them, for we have just gotten new nets."

Dan got Bell to take the ducks,—"I couldna bear them; there was nae water for them; my cocks wad dab them till there was no' ane left; it wad be a great obleegement to me."

When Dan reached his cottage he could not rest, but smartly took up his fishing-rod and strode to the river-side. The evening air cooled him, and he was further consoled by a good take. Under the "bass" (straw door-mat) at Knowe Park kitchen door next morning, Bell found a ten-pound salmon and three good large trouts—possibly they had not "passed" the water-bailiffs. Bell looked at all sides of the question, "what to do with them?" Many difficulties presented themselves to her honest, correct mind, but as the greatest of these was, "What else could she do with them?" she took in the foundlings and used them well.

There was a little coming and going between Bell and Dan, until the chickens were able to shift for themselves. When this was the case, he carried them carefully over to his own house, and shared it with them for a few months. The ducklings throve with Bell, and she repaid them and the fish (for she found out that her guess as to its having come from Dan was correct) in several ways, but principally by occasional dozens of her "buttered" eggs. When eggs were abundant, and therefore cheap, she preserved a large quantity by rubbing them all over when newly laid with a very little butter, and laying them in salt. It was generally thought she had some special receipt or "secret" for treating them, as her buttered eggs had a fresh, rich, curdy flavour which few preservers could attain.

A penurious old maid had complained to Bell that "she did not *understand* her hens; she was quite provoked at them, because in the summer-time, when eggs were only sixpence the dozen, they laid lots, but in the winter-time, when they were more than double that price, they would not lay at all."

Bell's reply was, "I daresay no'; but 'deed, mem, ye'll need to baith feed them better, an' keep them cleaner and cosier, or they'll do but little for you."

The nicknames by which Dan had formerly been distinguished were, after the affair of the ducklings, dropt entirely out of use, and he was thereafter spoken of as "Braidnebs," although none dared use it in his hearing with impunity.

Thomas Scott, the farmer of Babbie's Mill, a forward, ill-bred man, was talking in the market with Mr. Taylor, the elder already referred to in these "Bits." Dan chanced to pass near them, and the miller said, loud enough for him and most of the folks about the cross to hear, "Braidnebs or no' braidnebs, the game's there onyway."

Dan scowled at the miller, and tried to suppress his rage. In his own words, "I tried to steek [close] my mouth, but there was a rattlin' in my throat like to choke me. I lookit at Mr. Taylor. He kent [knew], 'deed, a'body kent, that the miller's wife was a yammerin' [grumbling], petted cat; so I said, 'Maister Taylor, there's a big bubblyjock [turkey-cock] gangs about Babbie's Mill yonder, but he's dabbit [pecked] to death wi' a hen.'"

Poor "Babbie's Mill" was well-known to be "henpecked" at home, and the laugh was so cleverly, so deservedly, so daringly turned against him, that he was nonplussed for a few seconds, but quickly screwed up his courage, and tried to look disdainfully at Dan. Dan's single eye was glaring at him, and the blank socket of the other was twitching nervously. The miller looked bold, and said, "Go about your business, ye ill-tongued scoundrel!"

"Ye what?" shrieked Dan, going close up to the miller, who stept back and tried to move off; but Dan followed him closely, and poured out, in a voice compounded of bawling, howling, and hissing, while all the time his arm moved quickly up and down: "What did ye say?—ill-tongued? Wha has as ill a tongue as yoursel', if it be na your wife? Ye'll daur to insult a man in the middle o' the street that wasna meddlin' wi' you, an' then speak o' him being ill-tongued! Gae hame to Babbie's Mill an 'clapper' there like yer auld mill, an' tak' double 'mouters' [a miller's perquisites taken in meal] out o' ither folk's sacks to fill yer ain. Ye're no' mealy-moo'ed [mouthed] though ye're a miller; dicht the stour [dust] aff yer ain tongue before ye

try to mend ither folk's. You should be the last man to ca' onybody a scoundrel; them that meets ye in the market wad think butter wadna melt in yer mouth, but let them gang to Babbie's Mill an' they'll find ye can chew gey hard beans. What d'ye think o' that, Babbie? Wha has the sharpest neb noo? Whare's the game noo? I think I've broken your spurs an' toozled [ruffled] yer feathers. Gang hame an' cower in the corner an' get dabbit, bairn. Ye're weel ca'd Babbie—ye're just a big babbie—that are ye; an' if ye never kent that afore, ye ken noo, onyway."

Thomas Scott, the miller of Babbie's Mill, slunk off a sulky, crestfallen man. From that day he was nicknamed "The Dabbit Turkey," and turkeys became known in the district as "babbies,"—not a little to the confusion of those who did not know the above incident, for it was not uncommon to hear of "a slice of a good fat babbie;" that Mrs. Graham had killed twenty babbies and sent them in to Edinburgh for Christmas; and, what was perhaps more puzzling still, that Mrs. Clark "had gotten seven babbies killed by rats in one night, but it didna pit her very sair about, for she had as mony left as she cared for."

I will have occasion to fill in some of the "lights" of Dan's character before I finish these "Bits;" meantime I must leave him in shadow, and deal in my next chapter with a widely different subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLINKBONNY FREE CHURCH.

"Brought freely their offerings, and with one accord
Sang, Glory and praise and worship to God!
Loud rang the exultation. 'Twas the voice
Of a free people."

William Sotheby.

THE formation and early history of the Free Church congregation of Blinkbonny is the subject of the following chapter; and I feel it is one of special difficulty, not from any scarcity of interesting matter, but from the fear that my treatment of it may unhappily be misconstrued as an indirect attempt to promote sectarian interests.

Nothing is further from my intention than to make the Established Church compare unfavourably with the Free Church. My desire is to present to my readers a sketch of some of the things that occurred, and some of the persons engaged in them, as far as my memory will enable me to recall these; not as a partisan, but as an annalist. I disclaim any such ambitious design as attempting to embody a description of what might be taken as a fairly representative Free Church minister and congregation of Disruption times. When I have to introduce matters relating to the other churches, I shall try to confine myself to what will tend to account for or explain the proceedings of the Free Church of Blinkbonny, without stirring up old questions or unduly favouring any side.

It is not too much to say that the Disruption of 1843 was a great event, especially so for Scotland. The 18th of May 1843, on which it took place, is a day to be remembered, as, during its course, a noble spectacle of adherence to

principle at great personal sacrifice was witnessed, of which any nation might justly feel proud. Nor were there awanting expressions of admiration; for, even those who took the opposite side, and considered the Disruption as unnecessary and unwise, recognised it as a grand exhibition of Christian courage.

> "All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
> And even the ranks of Tuscany
> Could scarce forbear to cheer."

Hundreds of highly educated men,—men of large experience and sound judgment, many of whom had near and dear ones entirely dependent upon them, and most of them with no means of providing for their households or themselves excepting their incomes as clergymen,—men of like passions and wants, and weaknesses and necessities, as the rest of mankind, left the Church of their fathers, the Church of their life-work, the Church they loved and had tried to protect and beautify, because they considered *that* to be their duty to their divine Master. The result has happily shown that in Scotland, and various parts of the world, tens of thousands of men and women could not only applaud such heroism as a grand sentiment, but could and did rally around the heroes, espouse their cause, and provide abundantly and with alacrity means not only for the supply of their temporal wants, but also for pushing forward the cause they had at heart. Nor was personal effort awanting; for the Disruption ministers and leaders were themselves surprised as well as delighted at the zeal, energy, and devotion with which persons of all ranks became fellow-workers with them in building up the Free Church of Scotland.

The present generation knows but little of the occasional but determined opposition which many landowners displayed, particularly in the refusal of sites for Free churches, and even resolving to do what they could to starve the people out, and drive them back to the Established Church: or of the great hardships and privations to which ministers and congregations were exposed, not only by the refusal of sites, but by petty tyrannies exercised upon them, and on those who befriended, even on those who only pitied, these humble worshippers among the fir woods of Strathspey, on

the stormy headlands of Mull or Skye, or on the bleak shores and barren moors of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Even in the Lowlands, among the pastoral solitudes of Canonbie and the gusty moorlands of Wanlockhead (said to be the highest inhabited village in Scotland), sites were not only refused, but our common humanity was outraged by wanton and sustained interference with such poor protection as a thin tent, an old barn, or even a quarry might afford; and this, not only in the year of the Disruption, but for years thereafter, until it was made the subject of parliamentary inquiry.

To those to whom such facts are new, I recommend the perusal of the *Annals of the Disruption*, Part III., recently issued by authority of the Free Church of Scotland. Besides giving interesting accounts of the trials and privations above referred to, the book tells that, being unable to procure a site for a church, the expedient was resorted to of a floating manse—the "Betsy," an old boat of 12 tons burden, which, although very unfit to stand the storms of the Atlantic, was used by the Rev. Mr. Swanson to pass from one stormy shore to another amongst the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This thrilling tale of evangelical missionary heroism and enterprise has been graphically described by one of the most genuine and reliable of Scotland's sons who

> "Departing, leave behind them
> Footprints on the sands of time,"—

the late Hugh Miller, in his interesting book, *The Cruise of the "Betsy."*

I had written thus far, and was asking a friend for sources of accurate information on this point, when he drew my attention to the *Annals*. Since I have read the book, I add my humble testimony to the admirable manner in which it presents many interesting and well-told tales of those recent Scottish worthies.

The story of the determined adherence of these suffering witnesses to their conscientious convictions in the face of ill-treatment and persecution, reached Blinkbonny, and awakened not only a burst of indignation towards those who did the wrong, but it provoked a feeling which manifested

itself in substantial help, as well as sympathetic admiration towards those who suffered the wrong. To this, coupled with the high esteem in which Mr. Barrie was held, quite as much as to intelligent adherence to any well-thought-out theory of church government, may be attributed the strong hold which the Free Church took upon the good folks of Blinkbonny.

The hand of tyranny laid on those distant members of the "body, the Church," travelled like an electric current, and proved, in the case of those members more happily situated, to be "the touch of nature," in making them feel more and more "kin" to "the bound as bound with them." The result was that they stood by them, and by the principles they contended for, so firmly, that those through whom the offence came ceased their violent dealings, and found that the wave of truth and principle and progress

"Rolled not back when Canute gave command."

Only those who know Scotch village life well can estimate how much of its variety and interest and conversation centres in the churches. No other topic has the same power of gathering people together; and such questions as, "Who's to be assisting you?"—"Is your own man at home just now?"—"Does he belong to 'oor body'?"—"Where did he sit in Stirling?"—"Will he be coming among us?" required nothing more to convey to nearly everybody that they were questions about church affairs.

A site was easily found in Blinkbonny, and a plain building of small gables and no architectural pretensions, on what was then known as the Tanfield Hall plan, was ready for occupation before the winter had set in. Previous to this, a regular congregation had been formed. The majority of the elders "came out" with Mr. Barrie, so that a session was easily made up. The Free Church also revived, what most of the other churches in Scotland had overlooked or discarded, viz. the order of deacons, whose special function is to attend to the secular affairs of the congregation, and who are solemnly "ordained and set apart" for that important work. To this more complete carrying out of the apostolical practice may be attributed much of the success

which has attended the financial schemes of the Free Church, as it brought into her service the active, the shrewd, the prudent, and the willing, and provided a congenial sphere for the exercise of their various talents.

The session has as its special province the spiritual affairs of the congregation, and, as the higher court, it affords greater scope for the exercise of the gifts of utterance, readiness in the Scriptures, etc., on behalf of the members generally, but particularly towards the afflicted, the weary, the backsliding, or the erring. The session is, besides, associated with the deacons' court in the superintendence, or at least the regulation, of the secular affairs; and a combination is thereby secured, which old George Brown characterised, on the occasion of a proposal to establish a deacons' court in Blinkbonny, thus: "What I said after the meetin' in the hall on the Saturday after Mr. Barrie cam' hame was, 'As it were the company of two armies,' but I didna think o' the deacons' court at the time. But I've been readin' the Acks o' the Apostles, an' I find that the want o' deacons hindered the very apostles; but when they got them the murmuring was not only stoppit, but the number o' the disciples increased greatly, an' even a great company o' the very priests, the unlikeliest of all kinds o' folks, were added to the Church. I wonder what for every kirk hasna deacons? Maybe it's because Stephens an' Philips are a wee scarce now-a-days; and I'm inclined to think that we'll a' find that we've a great deal to learn about how to conduct kirk business o' a' kinds."

I became a member of the first deacons' court.

When the church was fit for use, we parted from our Secession friends with a grateful sense of the generous treatment we had received at their hands, which we expressed as warmly as we could, and there is still much kindly interchange of brotherly affection between the two congregations.

The readiness with which several persons offered to place themselves at the disposal of the congregation, according to their ideas of what they could do, was highly gratifying, or, according to old George Brown, "marvellous in our eyes." The appointment of a church officer or beadle was brought up at a congregational meeting; but it was quickly settled

by Walter Dalgleish, a jobbing gardener, who had from the first been a staunch adherent of the Free Church. "You will need nae paid beadles," said Walter, half rising from his seat; "I'll serve ye in that capacity if ye'll alloo me, and be proud to do't for naething."

He proved a capital officer, and when the funds were prosperous he was offered a salary. His answer to this proposal was unanswerable. "Christian friends," said he, "I've been mair than paid already. Me an' ma household have had what we read of in Second Samuel, sixth chapter an' twalth verse, how the Lord blessed Obededom and all his household, when the ark rested in his house for three months. If ye're pleased wi' me, just let me do as I've been doing; or tell me hoo I can do better, an' ye'll no' need to tell me twice if I can help it."

For the leading of the psalmody there were several ready offerers. Of these, Andrew Taylor, son of Mr. Taylor the elder already spoken of, most frequently occupied the "desk," as the precentor's seat was called (sometimes, however, the "bunker"). On one occasion it was the "turn" of his worthy father to stand at the "plate" in the lobby where the "collection" was being made, along with a deacon named William Morrison, who was by trade a joiner, and had been working during the greater part of the summer, in a neighbouring county, at a new mansion-house. Andrew Taylor had a voice of considerable power and sweetness, and William Morrison did not know he was to lead the praise that day. When the clear, silvery voice reached the deacon's ear, he turned quickly to Mr. Taylor, and said, "Wha's that that's precentin'?"

"It's our Andrew," said Mr. Taylor.

"Your Andrew, Mr. Taylor!" said William, extending his hand, and shaking Mr. Taylor's warmly. "Your Andrew! Ah, Maister Taylor, Maister Taylor, it's glorious a'thegither! It's by-ordinar' grand to see sae mony finding out that they're like the thousand an' seven hunder an' threescore in the ninth chapter o' First Chronicles, 'very able men for the work of the service of the house of God,' that were clean idle before. Eh, Maister Taylor, Maister Taylor! I maun join in,—I can*not* keep mysel' quiet."

These two office-bearers, standing at the plate in the lobby opposite the open door, sent "forth their song of praise" into the street, for they knew the Psalms too well to need a book. The appropriate words added strength to their lungs, for they form part of the 144th Psalm, and were sung to the tune "New London":

> "That, as the plants, our sons may be,
> In youth grown up that are;
> Our daughters like to corner-stones,
> Carved like a palace fair."

I may here state that not the least observable change in the new state of things was the additional meaning and force found in the Psalms of David. Possibly they are best adapted for a militant, progressive, almost agitated state of the Church. In our parish church, by the same people, they had been regularly sung, but seldom "entered into;" now, even in the reading of them by the minister, there was new light thrown upon old psalms. Many in the congregation might be seen giving an appreciative nod, and those near them would hear a slight "hem," as much as to say, "I never observed that before."

There was possibly a tendency to apply to present circumstances what suited other and often all times; at all events, the psalms were sung with intense feeling. To specify the favourites would be to copy a great part of the Book of Psalms. If anything, the nineties had the palm, but the forty-sixth—"God is our refuge and our strength," Luther's '*Ein' Feste Burg*"—became as popular with us as it had been in Germany.

Perhaps this may account for the slow progress which hymns made for many years in Scotland. Many of these noble compositions of Christian genius are now used as vehicles of praise, and unquestionably they have their place and power in the service of song; but the older folks still maintain that they want "grup;" and the early Scottish Church found ample material for expressing its aspirations or presenting its tribute of grave, sweet melody in the old Psalms of David.

To Mr. Barrie the summer was one of special excitement.

He was much occupied with the affairs of his own congregation, as well as with those of the Free Church of Scotland generally. He had always been a studious man, was a fair scholar, and had given conscientious attention to his preparations for the pulpit and the visitation of the sick. But he now appeared to have received new life, and an increased power of penetration into many parts of Christian duty. Instead of relaxing what in Scotland is called "discipline," or lowering the terms of communion, he was more emphatic than ever in pressing upon all, especially young men and women, never to profess what they did not firmly believe and feel, or join the church because it was generally done by persons about a certain age. He seemed absorbed in his Master's work, and his former reading, experience, and observation proved a magazine whence he could draw for his ready service illustration, incentive, or appeal.

He not only surprised others, but was a wonder to himself. Thoughts flowed upon him as he prepared in the study for pulpit work; light so broke in as to surprise and refresh him; parts of Scripture that before seemed barren, were now bristling with meaning and practical lessons. What surprised him most was that he hardly ever needed to look into commentaries or books of systematic theology. The circumstances of himself and his people were so real to him, that nearly every verse he read seemed a good text for a sermon; and his difficulty now was to arrange his ministrations so as to give to each part its proportionate share of attention.

"I seem to myself," said he to a brother minister, "to resemble the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. Up till now I have been lame from my mother's womb; but I feel as if my feet and ankle bones had received strength, and it has become with me more like 'walking, and leaping, and praising God.'" His fear as to the support of his family, which had been so very trying to him, was now gone; and although he did little in the way of directly stimulating congregational liberality, he in the course of his preaching brought out, what few of us had noticed before, the great prominence which giving to God's cause occupies both in the Old and New Testaments, and its reflex influ-

ence upon the Church. This too-long neglected truth, spoken in faithfulness and love, emphasising, or rather giving its due place to the extent and obligations of Christian stewardship, went to the hearts of the people, and they offered willingly. During the first year of its existence the congregation raised more than had been collected in the Established church of the parish for fifty years.

Throughout Scotland much of the same spirit existed. The continuous rain of £1000 a-day, as Dr. Chalmers called it, kept pouring on and on—so much so that those who were looked upon as martyrs in '43, were spoken of as heroes in '44. Indeed, their heroism, like all other heroisms, was by many considered rashness; and when they undertook to erect schools as well as churches, it was thought that the "ship would certainly get over-freighted and speedily go to the bottom." Yet, the more they attempted, the more they prospered, until, like the Israelites in Egypt, "the people multiplied and waxed very mighty."

Well do I remember the evening of our first annual soiree. The treasurer's report was read, and it told of £400 paid, and an additional £300 promised. When the treasurer finished, Mr. Barrie stood up, and, without book, without even giving out the number of the psalm, repeated with great vigour—

> "When Sion's bondage God turn'd back,
> Like men that dream'd were we;
> Then filled with laughter was our mouth,
> Our tongue with melody," etc.;—

the meeting started to its feet and sung the entire psalm: the singing *was* hearty.

The experience of hundreds of Free churches in Scotland was similar to that of Blinkbonny; and, when we consider that the members were only a moiety of what those of the Established Church had been previous to the Disruption, and that they had not been trained to systematic giving (for it is matter of history that the contributions of the Church of Scotland previous to 1843, for charitable and religious purposes, were utterly disproportionate to her wealth, and fell far short of what the Dissenters of that period raised), we

are the more struck with the stream of devout and intelligent liberality which flowed into the Free Church treasury, steadily and continually, and which is still flowing.

The years from 1844 to 1847 severely tried the resources of our country. Owing to the potato disease and consequent dulness of trade, poverty and want came to many doors, and hundreds not only denied themselves luxuries, but used many things formerly considered necessaries more sparingly, in order to alleviate the distresses of suffering Ireland and the Highlands, as well as the general poor. Instead of the one call interfering with the other, both were promptly and nobly met, to an extent that a few years before would have been declared unattainable.

I cannot refrain from making particular mention of the cause of foreign missions. It can readily be supposed that with churches, manses, and in many places schools, to be built, and the ministry to be supported by spontaneous contributions, with no fixed source of income, and little experience of voluntary liberality, the Free Church had so much to do at home that it could have neither call nor means to undertake foreign mission work.

The mission question was complicated and perplexing. The missionaries of the Church of Scotland, being outside the arena of immediate conflict, yet conversant with the matters in dispute, were as well qualified as any men could be to judge of the points of contention; and their decision as to whether they would declare themselves as adhering to the Established or the Free Church, was anxiously looked for.

To all human appearance the Free Church could do nothing for them,—certainly could guarantee nothing. However willing their spirit might be, the flesh seemed in this matter helplessly weak. Moreover, the "Non-Intrusion" matter was purely a home question, and did not affect the missionaries, and the Established Church had great wealth and power without any home call on her undeveloped resources.

The decision of the missionaries was unanimously and resolutely in favour of the Free Church. When this was announced to the Assembly at its meeting in Glasgow in the autumn of 1843, the enthusiasm was indescribable.

For several minutes the meeting was a Babel of cheering, shouts of joy, and mutual congratulations, friend rushing to friend to express or relieve their feelings; and every now and again the pent-up gladness exploded vociferously.

The Free Church had already undertaken enormous responsibilities. Would they assume this in addition? Dared they? Was it not a question of the certain king who had ten thousand soldiers to meet twenty thousand? Had they a clear call to go forward? It was a solemn question. Yes! required strong—very strong faith. Would they say Yes? No! was the loud answer of sight,—clearly, unquestionably, No! No!!

The foundation of the Home Church had been laid in a way that was wonderful in their eyes. Was the building ready for this grand copestone?

"It will crush it to atoms," said the adversary.

"Never!" was the triumphant reply. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!" And, strong in faith, the support of the missionaries and mission stations was undertaken with enthusiasm.

All the funds collected for the mission cause (previous to the Disruption) were of course in the hands of the Church of Scotland, and retained by it, although these had been largely supplied by individuals who now formed the Free Church. The mission premises abroad were also appropriated, and even the mission libraries and educational appliances, although these had been mostly brought together by the personal efforts of the missionaries or their friends, so that the Free Church got the living men only.

This was according to the *letter* of the law, but many of the best men in the Established Church strongly insisted that the funds should be partly apportioned to the Free Church; and that the property and appliances should go with the missionaries, as equity and consistency alike indicated, even in the things that were Cæsar's. A reverend father of the Established Church thus expressed himself on the subject:

"The question yet to be settled is, are they ours? Did I

say yet to be settled? That depends on the court in which the question is tried. In the highest court, the decision of the greater than Solomon in this matter would unquestionably be in favour of the Free Church. 'Give her the living child, she is the mother thereof;' this has already been done, and it is a *mean* thing to send her empty away."

When it was proposed to contribute regularly for foreign missions in Blinkbonny, the elderly members deemed this inexpedient until our home affairs were put on a firm basis, but some of the ladies espoused the cause keenly. With some difficulty they prevailed upon Mr. Taylor to introduce the subject at a congregational meeting. His speech was far from being hearty; it was a mere question, "Could the members give to any scheme they liked?"

"Certainly,' replied the chairman.

"Well, there are some that want to give for foreign missions, and I propose the appointment of a missionary committee."

This was carried out, and before a year had passed £42 were collected. Strange to say, the other schemes seemed to suffer so little, that even George Brown, who was one of the most timid, "thocht the folk were made o' siller."

How different was this from what had been done for foreign missions in the old Church! I remember of the well-to-do farmer of Ramsay Lands asking two sixpences for a shilling, adding, "Isna this a collection for the missionaries? I fancy we'll hae to gi'e them a saxpence." Next week he gave to a curling club a silver medal.

He was justly esteemed a worthy, generous man, and his "saxpence" not unfairly represents the ideas of the times on the subject of missions.

It took considerable time and tact to reconcile the older folks to the exercise of missionary liberality. Coming from a meeting in which the missionary treasurer had announced that there had been collected for foreign missions during the previous year upwards of £42, James Wilkie, an old gamekeeper, questioned me:

"Mr. Martin, did I hear richt, think ye? did our treasurer say that we (?) had gathered forty-twa pound for thae missionars?"

"Quite right, James; forty-two pounds odds."

"It's a great heap o' siller," said he; "div ye no' really think that it's an awfu' pity to see a' that gude siller gaun out o' the country?"

I close this chapter with two reminiscences of Dr. Duff and the Free Church General Assembly.

The Home Mission report was being commented upon by Sheriff Monteith. He said home missions had not the romance about them that foreign missions had.

Dr. Duff sprang to his feet with a bound like a tiger pouncing on its prey, and said something like this:

"Romance, sir! Romance, did I hear you say!—romance? Are the burning suns of India romance? leaving home and kindred, and ease and comfort romance? exposing your family to the horrors of heathenism romance?" At each sentence he stepped nearer Sheriff Monteith, until, while saying something rather personal about not leaving his comfortable table to visit the dens of infamy in the Cowgate, his clenched fist was dangerously near the Sheriff's face. It was a short speech, but the look of burning indignation with which he delivered it, and the energy of his gesticulation, told powerfully. At the last words, "Romance, forsooth!" he sat down exhausted.

Never was "oil thrown on the waters" with quieter grace and effect than by Dr. Buchanan on that occasion. A few words sufficed, words of remarkable dignity and tenderness; at their close he took one hand of Sheriff Monteith's and one of Dr. Duff's, and placed them together. With great heartiness the two shook hands on the platform of the Assembly amidst the loud applause of the audience. I thought then, and think yet, that I never saw three as fine-looking, noble-hearted Christian gentlemen,—certainly never grouped on such a striking occasion. To me it seemed to be a living group representing Faith, Hope, Charity, but I could not undertake to determine which was which.

My other reminiscence is of the evening meeting after the union of the Free Church with the Original Secession Church. I can recall Dr. Duff's massive, sunburnt face, his thick, erect, bristling hair, and perfervid eloquence.

He spoke of looking out on his return from India for the

grand old ministers he loved to meet in his younger days. "Where were Dr. Andrew Thomson, Dr. David Dickson, old Dr. M'Crie, Dr. Chalmers? Not in the haunts of living men. He had to go to the graveyards and content himself with honouring their memories; and it made him feel as if

'The flowers o' the forest were a' wede away.'

But when he returned to the haunts of living men, his grief was forgotten as he saw Dr. M'Crie, the worthy son of a worthy father, Dr. John Brown, Dr. Grey, Dr. Glover, and men such as these, carrying aloft the standard of the Master. Truly great was the multitude that published the good news in Scotland, but what of India with its tens of millions? How was the Church discharging its duty to the heathen world?"

He then said, with a persuasive smile, "A mother in Scotland upwards of a hundred years ago thus testified her loyalty for an earthly prince:

'I hae but ae son, my brave young Donald,
But gin I had ten they wad follow Prince Charlie.'

Why not the same, why not greater devotion to the Prince of Peace, the King of kings? I ask not the tens, although that would be right, but in this day of small things I ask but one in ten."

CHAPTER IX.

BELL AT HOME IN KNOWE PARK.

"An' wow but the lassie was pawky an' slee,
For she smiled an' she smirkit till a' man,
Growin' a'bodie's bodie, baith muckle an' wee,
An' our folk wadna let her awa', man;
For when there was trouble or death in the house,
She tended the sick-bed as quiet as a mouse,
An' wrought three folks' wark aye sae canny an' douce,
Ye wad thoucht she did naething ava, man."

James Ballantine.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Walker found, when he became minister of Blinkbonny, that the congregation was much smaller than it had been under Mr. Barrie, he did not manifest a spirit of rivalry towards the Free Church; and, as his pulpit work did not require much preparation, owing to his having a good stock of sermons to fall back upon, he set himself to visit every house in the parish. He was a kind, sensible, neighbourly man, had a quiet way of giving useful hints, and, where needed, remonstrances or reproofs that often produced good effects.

While Mr. Morrison, the Secession minister, was the ablest theologian, and Mr. Barrie the best preacher, Mr. Walker was the best pastor. When one met Mr. Morrison, he was "complaisant" and heavy. Mr. Barrie was polite, but seemed at one time abstracted, and at another as if he were too late for some engagement; Mr. Walker was always courteous, affectionate, interesting, and interested. In their preaching, Mr. Barrie was the most rousing and popular, Mr. Morrison the most profound and exegetical, Mr. Walker the most sympathetic and practical. Next to the Bible, Mr. Walker's favourite book for pulpit preparation was Matthew

Henry's grand old Commentary. Mr. Morrison, on the other hand, consulted a great variety of authorities, ranging from Augustine and the Fathers to Robert Hall. Mr. Barrie drew largely from Calvin, Boston, Flavel, and the Puritan divines, as well as from the church historians, Knox, Neander, D'Aubigné, M'Crie, etc.; and, between the three, Blinkbonny was well off for ministers.

Mr. Walker took a warm interest in the administration of the poor laws, and as a member of the Parochial Board he pled the cause of the deserving, and firmly opposed the demands of the indolent or lazy, got up local flower-shows, and gave cottagers and others useful hints as to their gardens, so that these became the pride of the district. He was unsparing in the extermination of all preventable nuisances and everything injurious to the health of the community, tried to get a better playgreen for the boys, joined in the game of curling, and, stout as he was, proved a tough opponent, but at the same time a very pleasant man to play with or against. While he never intruded his profession, he never forgot it, and Blinkbonny soon came to look upon him as the most useful man in the place—"just a very fine man;" who, although leisurely in some of his ways, was well qualified to take an active part in public affairs.

He seldom spoke about the doings of the Free Church, and what he did say was of an inoffensive kind. He did not grumble at its success, or show any coldness towards its adherents. Certainly he wondered at the interest their services seemed to excite, and the money they could command. He thought that so many meetings and evening services might interfere with family and domestic duties; that there was danger of spiritual pride (there he was right); but upon the whole good was being done,—at least he hoped so, and, as minister of the parish, he rejoiced in everything that promoted its real welfare.

He had a few good sermons, and was specially proud of a series of lectures on the Parables. These he commenced to re-deliver, although not in strict chronological order. One of his best, in his own opinion, was upon "The Ten Virgins;" but he felt crestfallen when, having asked an old friend's opinion of it, he was answered:

"Mr. Walker, I've heard that lecture twenty years ago, and middling often since then. The virgins are auld maids by this time; ye should either marry them off or let them alane."

The lecture Mr. Walker thought his very best was about "the sower going out to sow." It was a congenial subject, for he had given agriculture very great attention, and he made it into two lectures, spreading it over two Sabbaths. He had preached the first part, and intimated that next Sabbath he would resume the subject, and hoped to conclude it. Unluckily for him, an eminent clergyman from Edinburgh ministered in the Free church that day, and, for the first time, he felt chagrined at seeing a very small audience in his church.

He told his candid friend John Tait, the following Monday, "that he was sorry to see so few in church yesterday. If I know myself at all, I feed my people with the finest of the wheat, and my memory of what Mr. M'—— was at college and in the Hall is, that he was an indifferent scholar, although a showy speaker."

John's reply was at least honest: "Oh ay, Mr. Walker; nae doubt, nae doubt, ye gi'e us as ye ca't the finest o' the wheat; but our wife bakes the best wheat scones in the kintra-side, and even they are the better o' a little butter or jelly or honey on them; and maybe ye're a wee scrimpit o' that sort o' kitchen to mak' your substantial fare mair toothsomer."

Between Mr. Barrie and Mr. Walker the relationships were cordial, although not familiar. Bell became reconciled to Mr. Walker, and even jealous when she saw that the manse garden and park were fully as productive under his management as they had been under her, although not quite so tidy.

The miracle already referred to, of how Mrs. Barrie could do what she did, as she did, on the income they had, still continued to exercise the wondering attention of the neighbourhood.

The flitting had been attended with considerable expense. Some new things had to be got for Knowe Park. The children were growing up, and the boys were, like all

healthy boys, "heavy" on their clothes; and besides, Mr. Barrie was a liberal contributor for the maintenance of ordinances and the erection of the new church.

Mrs. Barrie, seconded by her faithful Bell, stuck to her thrifty practices and household duties, at the same time taking a deep interest in all that concerned the church, and by her good sense and motherly counsel, quietly did much useful work. She made Mr. Barrie her first worldly care, and thus enabled him to overtake his arduous duties timeously and efficiently.

Bell was as constantly diligent as ever, working away in the house, amongst her live stock, and getting the garden up to her standard. When the long winter evenings set in, she kept stitching away, trying to keep all the boys' garments right; for that was her special department, as Mrs. Barrie attended to the girls' attire. Her knitting wires were nimbly plied at all spare hours; she could read and knit at the same time, and became well up in Free Church matters, as she got a "look of the newspapers" in the evening. Bell paid little attention to general news, but perused with great interest "a'thing about kirks." She also read with particular care all the Free Church magazines.

When November term came round, Mrs. Barrie, as she had generally done, put Bell's half-yearly wages, or "fee" as Bell called it, into an envelope, and handed it to her sealed.

There was an understanding between them that there would be no "speakin' at the 'speakin' time,'" that is, no asking Bell if she was "stayin'." Mrs. Barrie had done this for the first three years, but Bell besought her not to do so again,—"she couldna bide it; if she wasna gaun to stop, she wad gi'e plenty warnin'." Although Bell's fee had been increased more than once, she had never asked an advance, nor had Mrs. Barrie ever told her of it beforehand; indeed, the payment of the fee seemed the most trying part of the intercourse between the two, from the strange shyness which some fine natures feel when money matters are being settled between them. Not only was little said on such occasions, but Bell could not find words to thank Mrs. Barrie for raising her fee. She seldom got beyond "It's far ower kind

—far ower kind, 'deed is't." Mrs. Barrie felt the same difficulty, for her reply rarely exceeded, "Not at all, Bell; I wish—" Then passed on to another subject, and both seemed relieved, and entered afresh upon another six months' unclouded intercourse.

On this occasion, however, Mrs. Barrie was surprised at Bell's troubled look, and more so at her words.

"Mrs. Barrie," said Bell, handing her back the money, "I canna tak' it, and I daurna tak' it. Dinna be angry at me, an' oh, mem, dinna press me. This has been a heavy half-year on you; if I daur'd to offer ye what little I hae, I wad gladly gi'e a' my 'stockin' fittie;'" for an old "rig-and-fur" stocking was Bell's purse, and she kept it for safety in the bottom of the kitchen clock, covered up with a dusty wrapper, the only regularly dusty thing in the kitchen.

Mrs. Barrie thoroughly appreciated Bell's generous thoughtfulness, and although put about by it, she tried to keep this from Bell.

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "you are exceedingly kind, it is most thoughtful indeed of you, just like yourself. But I feel thankful to be able to say that there is not the slightest necessity for your perplexing yourself about us; we have enough and to spare, so please say no more on the subject; but thank you very much, Bell, all the same."

Bell was loth to yield, and only did so after repeated pressing. Mrs. Barrie left the kitchen, and had hardly sat down in the parlour, when Bell came in, and laying a one-pound note on the table, said:

'Ye've countit wrang, mem, if you please; ye've gi'en me a pound ower muckle."

"No, Bell, not too much," said Mrs. Barrie; "too little if you like, but not too much! You told me a minute ago it had been a heavy half-year with us. What has it been for you? You have done the work of two women at least."

"No' me, Mrs. Barrie, no' me. I have a gude place, an' been oppressed in nae way. Twae women's wark?—pity their men, or their mistresses! It's nae wark at a'; naebody meddles wi' me; I dae as I like."

"Because you always like to do well, Bell."

"I wish I did," said Bell, and was leaving the room when

Mrs. Barrie said, "I must insist on your taking that pound, Bell."

"No, Mrs. Barrie; excuse me, mem," said Bell. "I never disobeyed ye before, but I will not take that pound—I daurna take it."

"Do what you like with it, Bell, but pray take it away; it is yours, not mine."

Bell lifted it, and said, "For His cause." Her fee had been a consecrated thing for some time, and, seeing Mrs. Barrie declined it, Bell, with great comfort to herself, apportioned it between the Building, the Sustentation, and the Mission Funds of the Free Church; with the exception of one pound; with it she bought "Alloa yarn," and knitted cosy under-garments for the whole household, herself excepted. Bell did this at odd times, almost by stealth; and on New Year's Day, when the members of the family wished her a Happy New Year, she gave each some article of cosy clothing, saying, "That's your hansel;" but in the case of Mrs. Barrie it was varied by, "That's pairt o' yon pound."

Bell's cookery is a subject I cannot handle as it deserves. I have often heard her tell of the regular winter Sabbath-day dinner as follows:

"There's nothing beats a sheep's head. We hae ane every Sabbath; it's cheap, and very handy. There's this gude thing about it, it needs little watchin', and disna gang wrang wi' ower lang boilin': cleek it on, an' get it fair through the boil,—then cleek it high enough up so that it will no' boil ower an' pit oot the fire,—then ye may lock the door an' gang to the kirk, an' come hame when you like. It disna matter for an hour or twa, either; 'deed, it's a' the better o' plenty o' the fire—especially if ye hae a handfu' o' the 'blue pat-pea' in't, an' plenty o' barley. Then what's like the broth on a cauld day? An' then there's the tongue for the bairns, an' the head for the big folks. I like the feet best mysel' [that's like you, Bell]; an' the broth's grand next day—they're a denner theirsel's."

In cooking potatoes Bell could boil them till they were ragged in the "jackets," but "mealy" all through; bake them in the oven with their skins on, so that with a little

salt butter they might compete with eggs as a dish, and were "suppit" as eggs are; fry them till they were "delicious;" beat and brown them with a little milk so as to be a satisfying meal. Moreover, with the addition of dried fish, cod or ling, eggs or odd scraps, she made dainty dishes, such as I cannot get reproduced. Possibly the potato disease may account for this lost art, but only possibly.

I can speak from experience of her wonderful success with salt herrings,—"food for a king," as Mr. Taylor used to say,—and am tempted to enlarge upon her stews, "hashes," and haggises and white puddings. These were never too "rich," but palatable, digestible, and tempting, although often made out of what modern cooks put aside as unfit for family use. With common pot barley she made a delightful pudding, which beat rice-pudding hollow. But I must not make this a cookery-book.

On asking Bell to give me her receipt for a favourite dish, she replied, "There's nae receipt aboot it, Mr. Martin; just gang richt aboot it, an' ye canna miss. It's just as easy as A-B-buff when ye're into the way o't."

"Just so, Bell; but how do ye get into the way o't?"

"Tuts, Mr. Martin," said Bell playfully, "that's no' a man-body's parish; and as the sayin' is, 'Hunger's gude kitchen;' altho', in ma way o' thinkin', there's as muckle, if no' mair, lies wi' the cook as wi' the flesher,—that there is—'deed ay."

Bell always had on hand what cooks call "stock," on which she could fall back, as occasion required, for soups and gravies.

One bitterly cold day, a Mr. Kirkwood called at Knowe Park by desire of a Colonel Gordon, to make inquiries as to whether any relationship existed between his father's family and Mrs. Barrie, whose maiden name was Mary Gordon.

Mr. Barrie was from home, and the family dinner was, in Bell's phrase, an "off-pit." Mrs. Barrie, knowing this, expressed her regret that she could hardly invite Mr. Kirkwood to join them at their homely meal, as the chief dish was plain potato-soup.

Mr. Kirkwood's face brightened at the familiar name;

it reminded him of his early home; for he had been abroad upwards of thirty years, and had only recently returned to spend the evening of his days in Scotland.

"Potato-soup!" said he; "ah, that recalls old times. If it is not presuming on your hospitality, I should like immensely to renew my acquaintance with a very old favourite."

"With great pleasure," said Mrs. Barrie, as she showed him into the parlour.

It would be unjust to Mr. Kirkwood to call him a gourmand, but he was an epicure, fastidious in culinary matters, and fond of posing as an authority in gastronomics. He was accordingly helped to the soup. On the plate being placed before him, he eyed it lovingly, and the odour evidently pleased him. The first spoonful brought a smile, partly of surprise, but quite as much of delight, to his face; the second confirmed the favourable verdict; and the contents soon disappeared.

Smiling to Mrs. Barrie, and slightly moving the plate, he said hesitatingly, "May I presume?"

"With great pleasure," replied Mrs. Barrie. "I feel so pleased that you relish the homely fare. This bitterly cold day would make anything palatable if it was only hot."

Plate number two was more leisurely emptied, with increased marks of appreciation, and again casting a lingering look towards the tureen, Mr. Kirkwood said, "Excuse me, madam, I cannot recollect of ever having tasted soup equal to this, although knocking about the world has familiarised me with nearly every sort and style of cookery. It's superb; it's simply magnificent. Would it be outraging the laws of politeness, if—" and he again slightly lifted his plate. Mrs. Barrie, greatly pleased, helped him to plate number three with her happiest smile, for the table was now a merry one.

When the third plate was empty, she refilled the soup divider, and, looking toward him, said jocularly, "Allow me."

Mr. Kirkwood, in great good-humour, said, "You're very kind; I feel as if I could relish more, but must draw the line somewhere; no more, thank you. Pray, Mrs.

Barrie, may I ask if your cook would favour me with the receipt for this unique mixture?"

"I don't think she has anything so formal," replied Mrs. Barrie.

"Then may I see your cook?"

"We have only one maid-of-all-work."

"Then she must be a treasure. May I see her?"

"Certainly;" and Bell was called in.

Mr. Kirkwood rather startled Bell by abruptly saying, "Cook, how ever did you compound this magnificent soup? I never came across anything equal to it."

Bell, seeing he was in earnest, and that Mrs. Barrie was tickled, replied:

"It's just ordinary pitattie-soup, sir; but, the day, I had a ham bone, an' the stock was gude; an' ma way is aye boil the pitatties by their lanes, then pour them, then beat them, or as we ca't 'champ' them, then add the stock, and steer an' mix them weel, an' be sure that baith them an' the plates is het.'

"Ordinary soup!" said Mr. Kirkwood; "that's a matter of opinion; my idea is that it is the *ne plus ultra*."

The Latin quotation was far beyond Bell. She took "*ne plus*" to mean apples, and said, "The what, sir? What kind o' apples?"

"Ask this young gentleman," said Mr. Kirkwood, looking to James; "he's doubtless a Latin scholar. My translation is 'the top of the tree,' 'the head sheaf,' the 'never was beat,' the *crême-de-la-crême*."

Mr. Kirkwood walked off in high spirits, warmly thanking Mrs. Barrie and Bell, and leaving them highly amused at the unexpected compliment paid to their "off-pit" of a dinner.

Shortly after Mr. Kirkwood had gone, Bell asked James: "Was it apples that the gentleman said was in the pitattie-soup? I thocht he said apples, an' he spoke o' the tap o' the tree, and cream. What did he mean?"

James, not a little proud of having been called in as interpreter, gave Bell the literal translation of *ne plus ultra*, viz. "nothing more beyond," "nothing better."

Mrs. Barrie, knowing that Bell was well conversant with the facts of her early years, told her that Mr. Kirkwood

made very particular inquiries about her father, at the request of some Colonel Gordon, and asked Bell if she knew anything about the Colonel or Mr. Kirkwood.

Bell answered, "No, but Dan Corbett was coming to see about the pig in the afternoon" (it was to act as butcher, but Bell was too well-bred to put it so plainly), and she would ask him, as he "kenn'd a' the folk round aboot; and Dan will be divertit when I tell him that Mr. Kirkwood said oor pitattie-soup was like his game fowls, for he spake o' them as 'never was beat,' an' 'the top o' the tree.' I've been thinkin' that he micht mean that they were half pitattie-soup and half 'cockie-leekie.'"

After Dan's "professional" work was over at Knowe Park, he was greatly surprised when Bell asked him to "come in and get a cup o' tea;" adding, "It is a cauld nicht, an' I want to speak to you aboot twa-three ither things." He was even more astonished when Bell sat down to tea with him. The poor fellow had the diffidence generally so strongly developed in an outcast, and it was with difficulty that he could be persuaded to sit near the table. He could not think what had moved Bell to be so gracious, nor could she. There was something of late that led her to look upon Dan with pity, then with interest, then with a desire to try "an' mak' something o' the puir craitur';" and to-night she actually went the length of telling him, "as it was very cauld and stormy ootside, he micht smoke in the kitchen, if he wad blaw the smoke u the chimney as much as he could."

Dan's first remark after tea was over, and he had g the angle at which to deliver the smoke into the ch , was, "I think ye'll find Knowe Park fit ye fine, but na comprehend what gar'd Mr. Barrie leave the auld e."

Bell tried to show the difference between the nurch and the Free, but the points were much too fi r Dan's rough-and-ready way of reasoning.

"I wad 'a been very sorra if I had been Mr. Barrie. The Government as ye speak o' wasna meddlin' wi' *him*, and he was weel likit; an' they say this new kirk is takin' a heap o' siller to keep it up. *I* wad 'a bidden in the auld ane if I had been him."

"He couldna dae that wi' a clear conscience, although we a' left the auld manse, as ye ca't, wi' a heavy heart;" and Bell spoke to him at considerable length about the Disruption, and the family, and brought in "Wee Nellie's" death, and her grave in the old kirkyard, very touchingly.

"Aweel," said Dan, "I think ye were the mair fules to leave. Maister Walker's a nice man, but so is Mr. Barrie; and for a' I can see, the tane is as gude as the tither. Wad Mr. Barrie no' gang back yet?"

"Never," said Bell warmly; "ye may as weel try to move the milkin' stane o' Dumbarton!"[1]

As Bell said this, Dan's pipe dropped from his mouth, and he gave a nervous start; his eye fixed itself on Bell with more than usual firmness, as he said, "What do ye ken about the milkin' stane o' Dumbarton?"

"I come frae Dumbarton; sae does Mrs. Barrie. Did ye no' ken that afore, Dan?"

"No' me," said Dan; "hoo could I ken till ye tell't me? I never thocht on the matter at a'; it was nae business o' mine."

"Oh," said Bell, "Mrs. Barrie was a daughter, the only daughter, o' Mr. Gordon o' the Grainaries."

Dan rose in intense excitement, and said, "Preserve me! I maun awa', Bell; dinna speak to me ony mair about him, I canna bear't the noo. Oh, let me gang, Bell! let me gang!"

Bell was startled by Dan's sudden excitement, for she could see no reason for it; but, recollecting Mr. Kirkwood, she said, "Sit doon a minute, an' I'll tell ye a farce that happen't the day."

After telling about the potato-soup, she said, "You that kens a' the folk in the country-side, can ye tell me onything about this Mr. Kirkwood? He's been lang abroad, about India or some o' thae foreign places."

Dan was now a little quieter, and resuming his seat, said,

[1] The name given to an enormous mass of rock, which according to local tradition fell from the Castle rock into the cow park of primitive Dumbarton. One or more women who were milking cows are said to have been smothered by it: the guide may safely assert that their bodies are there yet, as the "milking stone" must weigh thousands of tons.

"That'll be him that's bocht 'Strathgowan.' I've seen him. He has some braw dougs: ane o' them, a mastiff, could, I think, fecht ma Burke, an' *he's* no' easy bate."

"By the bye," said Bell, "he was speirin' particularly about Mrs. Barrie's father." Bell said this *without thinking*, until Dan again started excitedly to his feet.

"I beg your pardon, Dan, but what makes ye sae wild when I speak o' auld Mr. Gordon? There's naebody here that ye need care for, an' there's something on yer mind, tho' I canna conceive what it can be. Whatever is't, Dan?" said Bell, as she tried all the doors, to show him that they were closely shut; then added, "Sit doon, Dan, an' gather yersel' a wee. I promised the mistress to speak to you about Mr. Kirkwood."

Dan swithered and writhed about, fixed his eye on the kitchen door, twirled his cap in his hands, but at last sat down, and looked thoughtfully in the fire.

'That's wiselike, Dan; that's like yersel', Dan," said Bell encouragingly; "they say ye were the best watcher o' a kirkyard in the county, and ye're no' gaun to start at naething noo. Weel, as I was saying, this Mr. Kirkwood was here the day, to obleege some Cornel Gordon that's come hame frae India, and that wants to ken about the Gordons o' the Grainaries, an' wonders if Mrs. Barrie was ane o' them."

Dan, still looking at the fire, said, "Div you ken a'thing about Mr. Gordon? I never kent till this moment he was Mrs. Barrie's father."

I stated in my first chapter that Mrs. Barrie never referred to her early history, and had strictly enjoined Bell not to speak on the subject to *any one*, so that Dan's question was a poser. She "took a very red face," and said, "A'thing, Dan? a'thing?" then going very near him she whispered, "I ken about the brandy, an' the tobacco, an' the salt, an', as I see you ken tae, we can speak freely about it; but mind never breathe the thing to ony ither mortal whatsomever about Blinkbonny, or ony ither place."

"But," said Dan, "did ye ever ken wha put the brandy an' ither things there?"

"No," said Bell, "not me; how could I? It never was ken'd, an' likely never will be ken'd."

"Bell," said Dan, looking her steadily in the face, "I ken, I ken a' about it, but there's no' anither livin' man that I ken o', kens that bit o't but mysel'; an', Bell, for your life, dinna tell onybody that I tell'd ye. Never let on to leevin' craitur' about it, no' a single whish."

There was a long pause. Bell was thinking the matter over and over, and Dan had more than once asked her to promise never to "breathe the thing." At length she said solemnly, "Dan, I'll never mention your name unless I'm sure it's to do Mrs. Barrie a good turn. She said something to me about a brother that this Cornel Gordon had, that was a wild man in his young days, and when he was dying he had written to the Cornel that if ever it lay in his power, he was to mind Mr. Gordon o' the Grainaries, for this brither someway hadna dune fair wi' him. I think I understand it a' noo. This brither's been ane o' the gang that hid the smuggled goods in Mr. Gordon's cellar,—ane o' them that the excisemen just missed by their boat 'whummlin'' [*i.e.* capsizing] at the milkin' stane, when the smugglers got off scot-free; an' although the judges kent fine that worthy Mr. Gordon wasna in the fault, and didna pit him in the jail, yet the excise officers wadna forgi'e a single farden o' the fine, and puir Mr. Gordon was a harried, ruined man through them an' the law expenses, an' the trial, an' the scandal o' the thing. The folk said that it was a kind o' a cousin o' his, that they used to ca' 'the Duke o' Gordon' for a nickname, that put the brandy an' stuff in the Grainaries, for he kent the place fine, but he never could be laid hands on after. I see't a' noo."

Dan remained silent for some time, then said, "Ye may say that, Bell; ye ken'd a' noo—a' but one thing, an' that is (but for your life dinna tell ony body), I helpit to row the boat that the 'Duke' escapit in."

Bell's mind was still busily turning the matter over and over. "I wonder," said she, speaking to herself, "if this Cornel Gordon is a brother o' the 'Duke's,' as they ca'd him? an' if he's no' marriet an' rich? an' if he means to mak' up for his brither's ill-usage o' the auld folk by giein' a' his siller to Mrs. Barrie? If I thought that, I would gi'e Mr. Kirkwood something that wad astonish him mair than

the tattie-soup did. D'ye ken, Dan, that I'm upliftit, fair upliftit?—it looks that like the thing."

Bell's glee communicated itself to Dan. "If that was to be the way o't," said Dan, "noo that the thing is lang past an' gane, an' they surely canna meddle me for only rowin' a boat" [Dan, Dan, only? well, let that pass], "I micht tell the 'Duke's' brither what *I* kent; but he's a cornel, an' thae sodgers are terrrible ill against smugglers."

Bell and Dan agreed to say "nothing to nobody" on the subject, until they were quite sure they could forward Mrs. Barrie's interest by doing so; and although some time elapsed before an opportunity occurred of clearing up the affair, the maintenance of strict secrecy was enforced by Dan every time he met Bell, by a significant motion of his fist, accompanied by, "Mind yon, Bell—Bell, no' a word about yon!"

While Bell went about her work as heretofore, a strong, confused undercurrent of thought kept constantly winding itself around Dan's connection with the misfortunes of Mrs. Barrie's father, or round Mr. Kirkwood and Colonel Gordon, and all got mixed up, until she was quite in a maze. Frequently did she lay down the stocking she was knitting, and think the matter over and over; but somehow she could never think it *out*, it only got more twisted and ravelled. Many a time did she catch herself in a "brown study," and resume her knitting with an impatient gesture, saying almost angrily, "This is ridic'lus. I'm fair donnert [stupid]; I'll gi'e ower thinkin' aboot it till mair licht comes—I think things will come a' richt yet."

Many a sleepless hour it caused her, and as her first call in the morning was upon Daisy, she unburdened her mind to the unconcerned cow.

"Daisy," she would say, "my pretty lady, I'm fair bamboozled [utterly confused]. I've hardly sleepit a wink the nicht; that mixty-maxty business o' Dan an' the Grainaries an' the Cornel has been bizz-bizzing [hum-humming] in my head. If I could but see Cornel Gordon his lane [alone] I could pit it a' richt; for ye see, Daisy, James is a big laddie noo, an' he wants to be a minister, an' that tak's a heap o' siller; an' Mary's gettin' a big

lassie, an' needin' music lessons; for ye ken, Daisy, a' young folk, espesh'ly a' young women folk, should get some music putten into them. Then there's Lewie, he's in Latin a'ready; and Flora, she's in the tenpenny book; an' wee Gordie—'deed he's no' that wee, but I like to ca' him wee when he disna hear me—he's gotten on the kilt, an' he'll no' be lang before he's upsides wi' Flora at the schule [school], for he's gaun to be a grand scholar. He's a feckfu' [very spirited] laddie, Gordie; he'll show them a' a dance yet. An' what bothers [troubles] me, Daisy, is whare's the siller to come frae? If I could just hae a quiet crack wi' the Cornel his lane, I think I could let him ken hoo he could do a great deal o' gude wi' his big fortune; for ye ken, Daisy, a' the auld men that comes hame frae India for guid an' a' bring wi' them bowsackfu's [large sacks full] o' siller."

It is difficult to transcribe intelligently Bell's conversations with Daisy—they were expressed in the broadest Scotch. I account for this on the ground that Daisy was not only a patient listener, and never asked the meaning of an unusual word or phrase, but that she was of the best and purest Ayrshire breed, and therefore certain to respect and enjoy the pithy Doric of the Land of Burns.

Bell was sorely tempted to unburden her mind to Mrs. Barrie on this subject, but it was the one topic which she had strictly enjoined her *never* to mention. During her first year's service Bell had once or twice unwittingly referred to old times at Dumbarton, and these were the only occasions on which Mrs. Barrie nearly lost temper with her. The manifestation of unutterable abhorrence which these provoked made Bell so studiously avoid everything that had the slightest chance of recalling it, that neither in Mrs. Barrie's hearing, nor in her conversation with others, did she ever speak of Dumbarton or her early association with it; this accounts for Dan's astonishment at hearing her refer to the "milking stone."

A strong interest in the Barrie family took possession of Dan, and although he had few opportunities of showing it, he hit upon one, the most unlikely that could almost be conceived, considering the sort of man he was, but one

which went as directly to their hearts as it did credit to Dan's.

When Bell paid her early spring visit to Nellie's grave, to "sort" it after the winter storms, carrying with her the first bunch of snowdrops, for which she had watched anxiously, she was surprised to find that some were already there.

She asked Guy if he had laid them there. He had not. She asked all the inmates of Knowe Park if they had strewn them;—they had not. She ran over in her mind every likely person, and asked all she came in contact with. All answered, No. It was only after getting Guy to watch very strictly (for other flowers had been added besides those she saw first), that she found out that they had been laid there by Dan.

Bell was amazed. "O' a' the folk in the world, Dan was the last onybody wad a' thocht on. Mr. and Mrs. Barrie could never guess him. There's mair gude in the craitur' than ever I thocht. I like Dan. Noo when I think on't, I'm awfu' glad that it was Dan."

As soon as Mr. Barrie heard of it, he called at Dan's cottage. This was the first time a minister of the gospel had ever entered it. Dan was a reckless, brave man, utterly indifferent about religion, but when he saw Mr. Barrie enter the house he became very uncomfortable—he felt the power of, at least, the presence of goodness, and what conscience he had waxed warm within him.

Mr. Barrie observed this, and knowing the way to Dan's heart, began first to talk of his dog, then of his ferrets, until Dan felt more at ease, and even offered to give Mr. Barrie a young bull-dog, which he thus described:

"He's pure bred, an' the vera picture o' Burke there; an' his mither, auld Nancie, that's noo deid an' gane, was the finest o' her kind in Britain."

"Then you miss old Nancie, Dan?"

"Miss her? *miss her?* Mr. Barrie!" said Dan, now quite at his ease; "I'll never get ower her death."

"Dan," said Mr. Barrie, grasping his horny and by no means clean hand, "I loved my Wee Nellie; and Mrs. Barrie and all of us thank you." Dan looked to the floor and said, "No! no!" but Mr. Barrie still pressed his hand

and spoke on. "Yes, Dan, and we love you for loving her; and, Dan, Wee Nellie would like to meet you in heaven to thank you herself."

Here Dan started and said, "Me in heaven, Mr. Barrie? me in heaven?—that's what neither her nor no other being will ever see."

"Why not, Dan? why not? Nellie's Saviour wishes you —yes, *you*—to get there, and the angels would sing a loud welcome over you; for as truly as you miss your Nancie, or we loved Nellie, as surely as Burke likes you to make of him, so true is it that our Heavenly Father wants you to come to Him; just as you are—wild, careless, sinful, bad, as you think your life has been. Your best Friend and mine up there," said Mr. Barrie, pointing upwards, "has commanded me to tell you this good news to-day. Believe it, Dan—believe it."

Dan was only able to say, "Is that a fact? Sent you to tell me that? I can hardly think that possible—an' yet you're a man o' your word; but it's no' easy believin't."

On the floor of the dirty cottage the two knelt together in prayer, and so simple were Mr. Barrie's words, and so single his heart, that it may truly be said they prayed together.

Mr. Barrie handed Dan half a pound of tobacco, although he had great difficulty in persuading him to accept it; Dan was almost stubborn in his refusal. Mr. Barrie, however, prevailed upon him to take it, and before leaving affectionately advised him to pray for himself;—"just plain words —only say what you think, and ask whatever you feel you need, but be sure and do it soon, and often, and always."

Dan said nothing,—it was all too strange for him,—but when Mr. Barrie went away, he thought over it, and smoked over it, and ultimately resolved to have a crack with Bell about it, for she could understand him better than Mr. Barrie. And many a chat they had, but Dan would not be persuaded to go to the Free Church.

"I micht try the 'Auld Kirk,' it was mair the puir folk's kirk, for they tell me that they're awfu' folk for seekin' siller in the Free Kirk; an' I've kent Mr. Walker langest, an' he's a hamely kind o' man—but we'll see."

So will we in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER X.

INCIDENTS IN BLINKBONNY.

"Oh! many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer little meant!
And many a word at random spoken
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken."
Sir Walter Scott.

THE energy of the Free Church had been a subject of special dislike to Miss Park; and when she heard that Mr. Barrie had called upon Dan, and that Bell, for whom, before the Disruption, she had a great respect, was on such intimate terms with him, and actually allowed him to sit in the kitchen, and even tried to make a Free Churchman of him, she was exceedingly bitter in her remarks upon all concerned.

One day Mr. Walker chanced to call, and she expatiated to him on the burning shame she felt at such ongoings.

"The Free Church folks must be hard up for supporters when they have to go to such a worthless vagabond and try to make a Christian of him. It is a disgrace, a scandal —it is sacrilege!" and much to the same effect.

Mr. Walker not only did not sympathise with her, but spoke very firmly to her for thus traducing the first principles of Christian charity, and declared that "the plucking of such brands from the burning was the grandest work the Church could undertake."

"Then why did *you* not do it?" said Miss Park.

Mr. Walker pled guilty to having been remiss in discharging such duties, but said he would try to amend, and would see Dan soon.

He told her that it was not an easy matter to meet every

case. "For instance," said he, "I was calling a fortnight ago on a man; he said he was in great distress, both of mind and body, 'just real ill—just real, real ill, every way, temporally and spiritually—a' wrang, body and the ither way; an' to add to my troubles, my landlord—the sweep o'er there—has warned me out o' his house, for altho' I aye paid him his rent, plack an' farthin', when I was weel, I've fa'en behind this half-year, an' I'm just fair despairin', just awfu' bad.' I advised him to cast all his cares, temporal and spiritual, cares of mind, cares of body, cares of estate, on his Maker, and ask His guidance.

"I have just returned from visiting him, and to-day I found him in grand spirits, although not, in my opinion, so much improved in health as to account for his being so very cheerful. 'Well,' said I, 'how do you feel to-day?' 'Eh, sir!' said he, 'yon was a grand advice ye gied me a fortnight ago, just an awfu' grand advice. When you went out I just did as you told me: I cast a' my care o' a' kinds, baith for this world an' the next, a' my care about mysel' an' fam'ly, indeed a'thing, where ye tell'd me; and,' he added, with a very hearty voice, jerking his thumb in the direction of his landlord's house, 'eh, man! *the sweep's deid;* he'll no' bother me again. So, ye see, it's a grand thing to tak' gude advice; an' hasna Providence been kind, kind?'"

I can recall a visit I paid to a widow shortly after her husband's death. He was a well-informed, active, abstemious man, but had a very violent temper, and was more easily put into a towering passion than any man I ever knew. On the slightest provocation, often on none, he would say the snellest [most biting], sharpest things. He was a fireside theologian, well read in the old divines, an extreme Calvinist, for he came of a Cameronian stock, and was a Pharisee of the Pharisees as touching every jot and tittle of church law and form.

I knew the household well, and when I appeared, Mrs. Gray welcomed me. She was a quiet, industrious woman, and had been to him a good wife under very difficult circumstances. She had got through with her work amongst the cows for the night, but had still on the rough worsted apron

of nappy homespun wool, called a "brat." She told me familiarly to take a chair, and sat herself down on an old high-backed arm-chair, which stood close to the fireplace. Two or three cushions lay on it, highest at the back, making it look an uncomfortable seat, but it enabled her to rest her feet on the floor, so that her posture was half leaning and half sitting. She filled her pipe, for smoking was not unknown amongst the women-folks round Blinkbonny, but instead of lighting it by a "spunk," she pushed it into the "ribs" of the kitchen fire, and left it there for a few seconds. Whilst she was preparing for her favourite "weakness," I referred to her late husband as mildly as I could, speaking of his infirmity of temper as now no more "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence" to him, for it had really been a source of "great tribulation" to his household.

She withdrew the pipe from the fire, and began to smoke. Some burning sparks were now and again falling upon her brat, but this did not seem to annoy her; she "dichtit" [wiped] them quietly down her sloping figure, and said after a few whiffs, "'Deed ay, it just shows ye"—here she took a few more puffs in silence—"that the grace o' God will bide wi' a man that nae ither body can bide wi',"—another silent whiff or two,—"for I haena the slichtest doubt but that Tammas is in heaven,"—some strong puffs followed, as the profuse smoke testified,—"*but* he was ill to thole [put up with] here. I had my ain adaes [to do] wi' him, for he was just a very passionate man; but ae part o' the white robe he has on noo will be the speerit o' meekness."

I trust my readers will not consider me tedious if I refer to another homely but worthy villager, an elder in one of the Blinkbonny churches, and a very reserved, silent man, almost afraid to hear the sound of his own voice. He was an undertaker, and was on one occasion engaged with a funeral. The company had met, but the minister did not turn up,—a very unusual thing, for clergymen are most attentive on such occasions.—(His absence was caused by the breaking down of a gig while he was on the way.) The father of the dead child whispered quietly into the undertaker's ear:

"Just pit up a prayer yersel', Mr. Sommerville, if you please."

"Eh!" said the worthy man; "no — eh! — no — oh! dinna, dinna ask me; no, I canna!"

After waiting a quarter of an hour, during which the elder was in a state of great nervous excitement, the father again came to him, but the elder beckoned him to leave the room. When both were outside, the father said:

"Eh, Mr. Sommerville, the wife, puir bodie, canna bear to let her wee Tammie be 'liftit' without a bit word o' prayer; an' she hasna gotten to the kirk since Tammie turned badly, an' she'll be the better, an' we'll a' be the better, o' a bit prayer. It's awfu' heathen-like to tak' awa' the bit bairn for gude an' a' out o' its mother's house without a word o' comfort; dinna refuse us—we're a' kent [known] folk here."

Mr. Sommerville, who was twitching his fingers until the father had finished, said, "Oh! for ony favour dinna ask me,—I positeevely cannot pray in company;" then taking the father's hand he pulled him towards him, and said with great earnestness, "I wad rather gi'e the *coffin for naething.* Oh! ask the new schoolmaster."

This was a young teacher who had lately come to Blinkbonny, and although taken aback, he shortly engaged in prayer. All present were much pleased, said that he was an uncommonly nice lad, very obliging, and anybody could see by his prayer that "the root o' the matter was in him."

It may seem strange to add that Mr. Sommerville was a first-rate elder; he was charitable, considerate, upright, and helpful to many. His advices were short, but very "pat:" to the rash, it was, "Leisure a wee;" to the foolish, "Mend your ways;" to the intemperate, "Do thyself no harm;" to his apprentices or workmen when they made mistakes, his reproofs were not rebukes, far less reproaches, but, "It's a pity," "Ye've gane wrong," "That's no' wise-like;" the most severe was, "That's very stupid-like."

Mr. Tait, the young teacher above referred to, succeeded the good old man who had been parish teacher for nearly half a century. He was selected from a list of applicants owing to the excellent testimonials he presented, and had

been asked to meet with the examination committee in Mr. Walker's house, before the appointment was finally made. Having acted a few years as assistant in a parish school adjoining Middlemoor, he was well known to Mr. Walker. Report said he was "after" a niece of Mr. Walker's.

Mr. Tait on the day of meeting was shown into the parlour where Mrs. Walker was sitting, the committee occupying the study. He told her how nervous he was, and he looked it. She told him not to be afraid—she would help him through. A roast of beef was being cooked at the kitchen fire, which she told the servant to carry through the lobby very slowly, especially as she passed the study. When the fragrant steam got well diffused, Mrs. Walker opened the study door, and said, "Mr. Tait is here, gentlemen."

The business that had till then occupied the committee was quickly despatched. Mr. Tait was called in, and Mr. Walker was leisurely telling the committee what he knew of Mr. Tait's abilities and scholarship, when Mrs. Walker, after the servant had again carried the savoury roast through the lobby, half opened the study door, and gave a significant nod to Mr Walker, which, along with the appeal to the lower nature through the sense of smell, proved irresistible. The gentleman deputed to examine the applicant did so with so much haste, and put such childish questions, that all present looked upon it as a farce, seeing he rattled off both questions and answers as fast as ever he could, and Mr. Tait had no occasion to utter a word.

Arithmetic,—said he. *Ques.* How many are six and four?—*Ans.* Ten, to be sure; that will do for that.

History.—Ques. Who gave the king the most practical lessons?—*Ans.* George Buchanan; right!

Geography.—Ques. Which is the largest town in the world? *Ans.* Why, Biggar of course—London's a big town, but Biggar's Biggar.

Mathematics.—Ques. What is a simple equation? *Ans.* Six and half-a-dozen.

Latin.—Ques. What is the Latin for fish? *Ans. Aqua vitæ*, or "Glenlivat." *Ques.* Translate *Ex nihilo nihil fit? Ans.* It's time we had something.

General Knowledge.—Ques. What's the best change for

a wearied teacher? *Ans.* Hill air, for it always makes him hilarious.

Literature—Ques. What did John Gilpin's wife say to him, and what did he reply?

Ans. "The dinner waits, and we are tired;"
Said Gilpin, "So am I."

The result was declared satisfactory. Mr. Tait was appointed schoolmaster of Blinkbonny. The merry company adjourned to the dining-room, did ample justice to Mrs. Walker's hospitality, and drank Mr. Tait's good health and great success to him, after the toast had been proposed by Mr. Walker, who, in doing so, spoke in most complimentary terms of Mr. Tait's uncle, David Tait of Blackbrae in this parish, who will prominently reappear in future "Bits."

My brother-in-law, the Rev. John M'Nab, had come out with the Free Church, and was assisting Mr. Barrie at a communion occasion. The sermon he preached in the evening had been very carefully prepared; the subject was "Heaven." I do not wish to give my own opinion of my relative's abilities, but three of my fellow-elders spoke of it as "most beautiful,"—"most impressive,"—"quite like a series of dissolving views." It was a long sermon, and the descriptive part occupied so much time that there was none left for the "application."

Old George Brown was, as he had often been, my guest for the "preachin's," as the services at communion seasons were called; and in these days they were superabundant in number, being two sermons on Thursday, one on Saturday, and at least one on Monday, besides on Sabbath from about eleven till four o'clock, and an evening service besides.

After we got home, George astonished Mr. M'Nab by the correct and full digest of the day's services he gave; and as he finished his *résumé* of the evening sermon, he wound up with:

"It was really a grand sermon. I never heard heaven so beautifully described, nor enjoyed a sermon better, as far as it went. 'Deed, sir, ye told us a'thing aboot heaven except *hoo to get there;* and, Maister M'Nab, you'll excuse me, my young friend, for sayin' that that shouldna hae been left out,

for ye'll admit yersel' if that's awantin' a's awantin'. Ye'll mind the feast at the marriage o' the king's son? The servants were not only sent out to tell that a'thing was ready, but to 'compel them to come in.'"

Mr. M'Nab said to me as we sat together after the others had retired, "I have been criticised by learned professors and doctors of divinity, by ministers of experience and ability as well as by fellow-students and relatives, but that good old man has given me more insight into what preaching should be than all these put together. I hope as long as I live I shall never, never, when delivering God's message to my fellowmen, forget to tell them 'how to get there.'"

George "got there" before another communion season came round, and with him were buried many sayings that were "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Those I have tried to reproduce will remind many, who are now far on in the journey of life, of the frequent use of Scripture language and metaphor made by the men of the past generation. A tall man was a "Saul among the people;" news were carried "from Dan to Beersheba;" a disagreeable man was "a Mordecai at the gate;" language which was in any way approaching profanity—and the standard was a rigorous one—was styled "part in the speech of Ashdod, and part in the Jews' language." Single names were also used to express characteristics, and were most expressive, such as an "Achan," a "Jezebel," a "Nathaniel," a "Goshen," an "Ishmael."

I have heard a keen politician, during the course of the election of a member of Parliament (in the days of open voting, before the "ballot" was introduced, when the hourly returns of the voting at the various polling stations were forwarded by swift riders from one to another, and the totals exhibited), ask, in order to know the state of the poll, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" I have also heard a worthy elder say in the presence of a young minister, "Mary, bring out Jeroboam." Mary produced the whisky bottle. My teetotal friends will doubtless think this a most appropriate name.

But to return to the thread of the story:

Mrs. Barrie had been so pleased with Dan's attention to

Nellie's grave, that she looked out some of Mr. Barrie's cast-off clothing (I may as well tell that Bell and she between them had "turned" them), and was debating with herself whether to go to Dan's house with them, or to send for him, when she met him at the manse gate. With considerable difficulty she prevailed upon him to come near the house, but could not induce him to set foot upon the front walk, much less come in by the front door.

"I'll stand here, if you please, mem," said Dan.

"But I wish to speak with you in the house, Mr. Corbett," said Mrs. Barrie.

Dan grinned from ear to ear at being addressed as "*Mr.*" Corbett; he did not remember of ever having been so named before, and kept repeating, "Maister,—Maister, if you please—Eh, Dan, ye'll dae now," laughing heartily either to or at himself. Dan seldom laughed—it was almost a new sensation to him; but the "Maister, if you please," tickled him immensely, and by the time Bell had the kitchen door open, for she saw him halt before the window, slap his leg, and laugh until even the blind eye opened and yielded copious tears (so she told), he was in a social, happy mood.

"What ever has ta'en ye the day, Dan? What grand news hae ye gotten? Have ye seen the Cornel?"

Dan said nothing, but brushed past Bell, until his mirth had expended itself, then replied:

"It's naething at a', Bell—it's fair silliness o' me; but Mrs. Barrie met me at the road end and said," here he fell a-laughing again,—"'Maister Corbett, if you please.' I'm no' used wi' such genty manners, an' like mony anither fule, I was laughin' at mysel'."

Mrs. Barrie came into the kitchen, and again called him "Mr. Corbett." He grinned from ear to ear, and said, "Ca' me Dan, if you please, mem; naebody ever ca'd me Maister a' my days afore, and it sounds very droll—*Maisterin'* me."

"Well, Daniel, then!" said Mrs. Barrie.

"Dan, if you please, mem—just plain Dan."

"Well, Dan!"

"Ay, that's liker the thing."

And Mrs. Barrie spoke very nicely to him; her silver tones touched his ear like music, and her words thrilled through

his heart as she thanked him for what he had so beautifully done at Wee Nellie's grave. With considerable difficulty she prevailed upon him to come to the dining-room to see a miniature of Nellie that a friend had painted from memory, and presented to her. There were other pictures and engravings on the walls, which Mrs. Barrie explained with so much sweetness and animation and clearness, that Dan forgot himself in listening to her. When she had gone the round of the room he asked:

"What did ye say about this ane, if you please, mem? I think ye called it the 'Angel's Whisper?'"

After she had re-described it, he asked about another and another. All the engravings were illustrative of suggestive subjects, and Mrs. Barrie made them doubly interesting by her explanations. Almost unconsciously to herself, she kept dropping into Dan's weary heart simple, loving words of truth and peace; and as the poor waif turned from one picture to another, Mrs. Barrie followed up her description with increasing interest to herself as well as to him. When giving him the clothes, she tenderly advised him to go to church, any church he liked, where he would *hear* some fine pictures.

"There's nane in the Blinkbonny kirks that I ever heard o', unless it be yon marble sodgers on young Captain M'Lellan's headstane at the side o' the auld kirk pulpit; an' I aye said to Guy's gude-faither,—auld Ritchie,—that it was daftlike to hae guns an' bayonets an' swords stuck up like stooky [stucco] images in a kirk. But I dinna ken what to do wi' thae fine claes [clothes]; they're no' the least like the like o' me to wear."

Dan, after much pressing, accepted them with a very proper bow, if lowness is any criterion, took another look at Nellie's miniature, and made several bows to Mrs. Barrie as he left the dining-room.

His description of the pictures gave Bell great delight, and every now and again she dropped in a useful word or hint as he went on. Dan ended with:

"Bell, yon picture o' Wee Nellie let's me a kind o' ken her noo, an' I will keep her grave snod. Then there's yon ane about the angel's whisper, an' anither ane I maun get

ye to let me see again some ither day. D'ye ken if Mrs. Barrie wad haud [hold] the kirk in the dinin'-room, an gang o'er yon pictures, she wad beat a' the ministers ever I heard" ("No very mony, after a'," thought Dan to himself, "mair's the pity"). "What for do they no' hae pictures in the kirk, an' tell the folk about them, like Mrs. Barrie? I think they wad soon fill their kirks if they did that."

Dan put on the clothes as soon as he got home, and scarcely knew himself. His first remark was, "Guy, mind yersel', or I'll rin ye hard for the beadleship!" His next, looking at his hands, "That's no' like thae claes." He then laid hold of his fishing-rod, took a towel with him (it was a ragged old potato bag), bought a bit of soap as he passed through the village, sought out a quiet pool, and made himself as clean as soap, water, and a rough towel could make him. After this was over, he said aloud, "Ah, but I'm the better o' that; I'll come here oftener," and started to fish. The best of the "basket" were put under Knowe Park "bass" as formerly, long after night had settled down. Next day Dan started to clean his house. Some corners needed it very badly. He managed wonderfully well, *considering*.

He had a strange dream on the night after he had seen the pictures, and after thinking over it and wondering about it for nearly a week, he was driven to tell it to Bell for peace' sake, as follows:

"I thocht I was in heaven, an' about the first body I met was Wee Nellie. I didna ken her at first, but she kent me, an' she was that glad to see me; an' somehow I wasna the least feared. An' she asked me if I would come an' see her mansion, an' she took me into a beautiful room, an' —but I couldna lay'd off till ye, so I'll no try't—an' I asked her wha gied her't, an' I never saw onything as bonnie as her face, or heard onything as sweet as her voice, as she said, 'Jesus! O Dan, come away an' see Him!' 'No,' said I, 'Nellie; He's no' for the like o' me.' If ye had seen her face when she lookit up into mine and said, 'But He is, Dan, He is; He likes you better than a' the gold in a' the world.' Then she said, 'I'll let ye see mamma's mansion next.' It was as bonnie as Nellie's, but it was a'

hung round wi' pictures, an' Mrs. Barrie was in them a', an aye some ither body wi' her—whiles ane, maybe Nellie, or maybe Mr. Barrie, an' whiles folk I kenned, an' whiles folk I didna ken; but she was aye in the middle o' the picture. An' there was ane wi' Mrs. Barrie an' mysel' in it, an' it was something like the 'Angel's Whisper,'—but the angels were awfu' like her tae.

"Then Nellie showed me your mansion, Bell, an' it was real beautiful, an' fu' o' bonnie pictures just like Mrs. Barrie's; an' I was beside you in some o' them tae. An' I noticed this particularly, that you had maistly aye on your everyday working claes in every ane o' them—your very commonest that ye wear every day, and hardly ever on your Sunday anes in ony o' them.

"Weel, Nellie said to me, 'Come away wi' me, Dan, an' see your mansion now.' I was kind o' terrified, but she could mak' me do onything she likit. Weel, we went to what she ca'd my mansion, an' the pictures round it were fearsome to look at, an' I was in the middle o' every ane; an' there was ane where there were angels very like Mrs. Barrie, an' Mr. Barrie, an' yoursel', Bell, speakin' to me, an' lookin' at me, an' pointin' up,—an' I lookit up.

"I was sae much ta'en up wi' the pictures, I didna notice that Nellie had gaen out; but when I saw Mrs. Barrie an' you pointin' up in the picture, I lookit up, an' that very moment Nellie comes in an' said, 'That is Jesus.' All at once the pictures vanished, an' the walls were as clean an' white as the driven snaw, an' there was only one picture left, an' that was Jesus. An' somehow He didna fear me till He cam' out' o' the picture an' showed me His hands, an' there were marks in the very middle o' them, like as if nails had been driven through them at one time; an' He was gaun to lay His hands on me when I wakened. The dream has never been out o' my head since, but I didna like to speak to onybody aboot it. D'ye think, Bell, that it means that I shouldna wear yon fine claes? or what d'ye think it means?"

Bell was greatly struck with the dream, and did what she could to press home the lesson it so clearly taught. But the eyes of Dan's mind could, as yet, only see "men as

trees walking," and when leaving he said, "Oh, but, Bell, mind He didna lay His hands on me; but that was maybe my blame, for I started back. But I'm glad I've tell'd it to you, an' you can tell Mrs. Barrie if you like."

Bell did so. And although Dan was not much changed outwardly, he liked to speak to Bell about "good things," gave over sundry bad habits, and went to Mr. Walker's kirk; although, poor man, he knew so little about the service, that on the first occasion, when Mr. Walker said, near the close of the sermon, "I will conclude by," Dan set off, supposing all would follow at once, and he was astonished that the folk took so long to come home from church that day. Generally his wonder had been, "Are they oot a'ready?" For Sunday forenoon had been the time when Watty and his cronies met in Dan's house or garden to discuss bull-dogs, game-cocks, and sporting matters. But they showed this respect for religion, that they did not start for Dan's until the church was "in," and left so as to be home before the church was out.

While Dan gave up keeping game fowls, he stuck to his other favourites, and became a quieter man; but I will not attempt to analyse his state of mind. I was informed that he attended the parish church, and that shortly after his wonderful dream he tried to put himself in the way of Mr. Scott of Babbie's Mill.

Mr. Scott stared to see Dan hanging about the door of the mill, and spoke rudely to him. Dan waited till he had finished, then quietly said, "Mr. Scott, there's a slap in the hedge, an' your sheep's among the corn. I've driven them out, and stappit [pushed] in a bush, but if ye've ony stabs or palings I'll mend it for ye in a crack."

"I want neither you nor your mendings."

"Aweel," said Dan, "I see ye're angry; and I can only say, Mr. Scott, if ye'll no' be friends, dinna blame me. I own I spoke sair in the market to you yon day, but was you no' first in the fault? I'm no' seeking onything frae ye, but as I'm an auld man I want to die in peace wi' my neebors, so I ax yer pardon, and bid you gude day."

"Die in peace?—ye'll die in a jail, or no' very unlikely on a gallows!" said the miller.

"Maybe," said Dan, "but Mr. Walker was tellin' us on Sabbath about a deein' thief, an' he was made a' richt when he was deein'; an' maybe Him that helpit him will help me."

"Dan," said the miller in astonishment, "are you gaun to the kirk noo?"

"Ay," said Dan,—"whiles."

"Weel, Dan, ye seem to make a better use o' what ye hear there than I dae; and, as ye were saying, we'll let byganes be byganes. And thank ye for telling me about the sheep."

"Aweel," replied Dan, "Mr. Walker whiles speaks about lost sheep, and I thocht as I saw yours amang the corn, that the sooner our slaps [gaps] are filled up the better for ourselves and for the sheep, for some o' them seemed *swalled* [swollen]."

The miller and Dan started with the requisites, mended the fence, looked at the sheep, smoked a quiet pipe, and parted.

"That cowes [beats] a'," said the miller.

"The canny way's the best way, after a'," said Dan.

Colonel Gordon was spending part of the summer with Mr. Kirkwood, and they called at Knowe Park. The Colonel's relationship to Mrs. Barrie had been clearly established; and a piano, with other marks of kindness on the Colonel's part, sent from Edinburgh shortly thereafter. Unfortunately Bell was not at hand when the gentlemen called, greatly to Mr. Kirkwood's regret, and their visit was a short one.

Colonel Gordon was in indifferent health, and Mr. Kirkwood would not allow him to exert or excite himself in any way, so that Bell's "castle in the air" was as hazy as ever; and as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Barrie had thought much on the matter, the presents were accepted as tokens of goodwill, and politely acknowledged as such, but they formed no ground in their minds for any, far less for such great expectations as they did in Bell's.

The social element in the religious life of Blinkbonny was greatly promoted by soirees and meetings of that nature

held in connection with the Free Church. Mr. Barrie used to tell of Mr. Taylor's usual welcome when he dropped in upon him of an evening: "Come away, Mr. Barrie, ye'll spend an hour wi' us. There's a great deal o' religion in sociality, an' there's far ower little sociality in our religion —for that's what I think is meant by the 'communion of saints,' it's just sociality—gude neeborship, as far as our firesides are concerned."

At one of these soirees—held, I think, in 1850—Sir John M'Lelland suddenly appeared in the lobby of the Free Church. Dr. Guthrie was one of the speakers, and the church was crammed, some young men acting as stewards and ticket-collectors. The youth left in charge in the lobby was so anxious to lose nothing of the speeches, that he did not even look round when Sir John asked, "Can you find room for me?" but curtly answered,—

"Have you a ticket?"

"A ticket! What sort of ticket? I have no ticket."

"Weel, there are no bags left, and there's no' room in the church, so you cannot get in."

This was said without the speaker even turning round to see to whom he was speaking. Luckily, one of the deacons chanced to come into the lobby, to whom Sir John said, "Can I get in? This young man spoke about a ticket and a bag, and said I could not get in."

"Stupid fellow!—beg pardon!—please come this way," was the reply.

When the too-eager steward found out his mistake, he was so utterly ashamed of himself that he stood speechless. And he "catch't it" from the other stewards; his evening's enjoyment was spoiled.

Sir John was shown into the vestry, and when the speaker for the time had concluded, was ushered on to the platform.

Surprise at his appearance added to the warmth of his reception. It seemed as if the audience would not cease their expressions of delight. When silence was restored, Mr. Barrie announced Dr. Guthrie as the next speaker.

Sir John instantly rose and asked to be allowed to say a

few words. He first told the story of the children and Dr. Guthrie at the post office, which made Kennedy the tailor mount first upon a seat, then stand astride upon two seats, and wave his Turkey-red and white spotted handkerchief so excitedly, and cheer so loudly, that he had to be taken down by sheer force.

After Kennedy was quiet, Sir John said, "My good friends, I spoke to and about Mr. Barrie and several of this audience, at the time of the Disruption, in a manner which I now regret. My language was unguarded and unwise. I will not detain you by expressing my present opinions; but I then publicly made some strong statements which I now wish as publicly to withdraw. Mr. Barrie, and hundreds of ministers of the Church of Scotland along with him, acted like true Christian heroes, and carried out their conscientious convictions in most difficult and trying circumstances. I honour them for so doing. But," turning to the audience, "I honour you, and those who form the membership of the Free Church of Scotland, for the noble and liberal and high-toned manner in which they have recognised this heroism, and triumphantly carried forward the cause for which they contended. The Free Church is, in my opinion, THE *event* of the century in Scotland, and I cannot conceive it possible that a more noble instance of adherence to principle could have been given in any other country in the world."

Then turning to Dr. Guthrie, he begged to be excused for interrupting him, and to the audience for trespassing on their patience when such a speaker as Dr. Guthrie was to follow.

Dr. Guthrie and Sir John shook hands long and warmly, and abundance of time was allowed them. When Dr. Guthrie did speak, it was with a "forty parson" power. He excelled himself, enchained his audience, and that soiree is a "red-letter" day in the annals of Blinkbonny Free Church.

Bell said it was "awfu' splendid,"—"just magnificent,"—"it beat everything,"—"she just couldna say what it wasna,—it was maist awfu', awfu' splendid!"

THE ANGEL'S WHISPER.

By Samuel Lover.

A superstition of great beauty prevails in Ireland, that when a child smiles in its sleep it is "talking with angels."

A baby was sleeping, its mother was weeping,
For her husband was far on the wild raging sea,
And the tempest was swelling round the fisherman's dwelling,
And she cried, "Dermot, darling, oh, come back to me!"

Her beads while she number'd the baby still slumber'd,
And smiled in her face as she bended her knee;
"Oh! blest be that warning, my child, thy sleep adorning,
For I know that the angels are whispering with thee.

And while they are keeping bright watch o'er thy sleeping,
Oh! pray to them softly, my baby, with me,
And say thou wouldst rather they'd watch o'er thy father;
For I know that the angels are whispering with thee."

The dawn of the morning saw Dermot returning,
And the wife wept with joy her babe's father to see;
And closely caressing her child, with a blessing,
Said, "I knew that the angels were whispering with thee."

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGES AT KNOWE PARK.

"But mony are the ups an' the douns o' life,
When the dice-box o' fate turns tapsalteerie."
Old Song, "Kate Dalrymple."

THE Blinkbonny Free Church congregation was now a strong one,—so strong that a Dorcas Society was added to its other schemes, and proved of great service to the members as well as to the poor. The choice of Mrs. Clark as convener was a happy one. She became the mainspring of the concern; faithfully did she inquire into all needful cases, and considerately did she administer the funds,—in some instances so quietly, that several compared the help they received to "Peter's sheet that was let down from heaven;" and, in not a few cases, the assistance was all the more welcome because, although it was greatly needed, it would only have been asked as a last resort.

The collectors had some difficulty in getting the Dorcas Society started. One of them—a Miss Roxburgh—asked a subscription in its aid from Mr. Skinner, a well-to-do and successful man.

"A what kind of society do you call it?—a Dorcas Society? What in all the world's that?" said he.

"It's to provide clothing and coals for the poor."

"Then why do you not call it something else than that foreign name, Dorcas? Is it Latin, or French, or what is it?"

"Oh," said Miss Roxburgh, "it's called after Dorcas, the woman that made garments for the poor. You'll remember about her,—Tabitha or Dorcas?"

"Not I. I never even heard the name before,—Tabby or Dorcas, or whatever you call her. Where did you fall in with her? I am certain it was not in the Bible," said Mr. Skinner firmly.

"Hoots, ye're forgetting," said Miss Roxburgh. "She is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. We read that she died, and the disciples sent for Peter, and when the poor widows showed him the clothes she had made for them, he prayed, and she was brought to life again."

"I read the Bible as well as you," replied Mr. Skinner, "and I never either heard or read of any such woman. It's not in the Acts, of that I'm certain. However, as the object is a good one, there's a pound to you; but for any favour give your society a decent name, for nobody will understand what Dorcas means. Dorcas! there is not such a word within the boards of the Bible."

After a year the society ceased to be a Free Church scheme and became a village one, but Mrs. Clark continued at the head of it. She made its administration a matter of conscience,—stuck to the principle of helping no one that had others—especially a "man"—that could work for them. The distribution of coals was to her a matter of first concern in the early winter; and, like Job, she could say, "The cause which I knew not I searched out," until the receivers came to speak of them as "Mrs. Clark's coals." I commend this "Bit" to what an old elder used to call "my female brethren," and am convinced if they go and do likewise they will in no wise lose their reward.

> "'Twas to share wi' the needfu' our blessin's were gi'en,
> And the friend o' the puir never wanted a frien'."

Mr. Barrie had some trouble over what was then known as the "Morisonian" controversy. I shall not enter upon the questions involved. They turned upon the decrees of election, predestination, and what are known as the Calvinistic doctrines.

George Hunter, a weaver, who held Morisonian views, had a faculty of putting the knotty points in a light which made the Calvinistic doctrines appear very monstrous, and thought he could easily corner Mr. Barrie. George at

length got what he had anxiously longed for, viz. an opportunity to fire off the cleverly worded sentences he had elaborated. Mr. Barrie, in reply, quietly stated the doctrine as embodied in the Confession of Faith, and quoted the Apostle Paul as his authority.

"But that's where me an' Paul differs," said George.

"What?" said Mr. Barrie, "that's where Paul and you differ? Do you not consider the Apostle Paul as an absolute and indisputable authority?"

"Weel," said George, "hardly; for I believe that Paul was wrang when he said that."

"Paul wrong!" said Mr. Barrie. "Your faith in yourself is certainly great, but you must excuse me for preferring Paul's authority not only to yours, but to the exclusion of all others," and thus closed the interview.

In the early summer of 1851, Colonel Gordon again came to reside with Mr. Kirkwood, near Blinkbonny; and although still an invalid, he was stronger and more cheerful. He had brought with him an invalid's chair in which to be wheeled about, and Dan was employed to push it. When Colonel Gordon first saw Dan he took a long, searching look at him, as if his face was not altogether unknown, but said nothing, as he thought it likely he must have seen him when in Blinkbonny last year. Knowe Park became the Colonel's favourite halting-place in his airings. This may at first have been brought about by a little management on Dan's part; but the old soldier soon grew so fond of the children, that every day when weather admitted of his getting out, he landed at the Free Church manse.

Bell liked the Colonel for his own sake. He was a fine type of the old Indian military man,—courteous, interesting, and still handsome despite his advanced years. Generally she had some tasty soup or other light refreshment ready for him, which he thoroughly enjoyed; he even told Mrs. Barrie that her cook did more to make him well than the doctor, and that he was afraid he would become like Mr. Kirkwood, who often referred to Bell's potato-soup in terms which he thought absurdly high.

On one of Colonel Gordon's visits to Knowe Park, little Gordie asked him if he would like to see the "new"

chickens. The boy's beaming face interested him, and he replied,—

"Certainly; if you will take me to see them."

Gordie, trained as he had been by Bell not to disturb her feathered friends, said timidly, "I think Bell would let you see them, but she'll not let me go myself."

Bell overheard the conversation, and was only too glad to get the opportunity. Dan wheeled the Colonel to the spot near the outhouses where the "birdies" were. It was some time before he could so far relax his old Indian notions about servants as to speak *to* Bell; but she was so attentive and so respectful that he gradually got into familiar conversation with her, and even referred to Mr. Kirkwood's constant praise of her potato-soup.

Bell, while keeping a most respectful distance, so thoroughly won his respect that he thanked her for the kind way in which she studied to have something tasty for him, and complimented her on her cookery.

"I'm glad to do all in my power for Mrs. Barrie's friend," said Bell, "for she's been a kind mistress to me; an' although no' rich in one respec', she has the best o' a' kind o' riches, for she has a' Martha's briskness an' a' Mary's meekness. As to the pitattie-soup, it was just what was gaun that day; but if Maister Kirkwood wad—as he's sae fond o' Scotch dishes—come here till his dinner some day, Mr. and Mrs. Barrie wad be glad to see him wi' you, sir,—but dinna say I said it,—and I wad try to let him have some o' the dishes he spoke about the first day he was here."

"Mr. Kirkwood would be delighted; he often speaks about these things,—oftener than I care about, for when he begins there's no stopping him."

"Well, sir, beggin' your pardon for bein' sae presumin'," said Bell, "if ye'll tell me what Mr. Kirkwood likes best, if it's a plain auld Scotch dish, I'll try to mak' it sae that it'll at least bring the gentleman in mind, as he says, o' auld langsyne; for a' our denners here are auld-fashioned, hamely fare."

"Really I could not choose for him. What do you think would be suitable? For I begin to relish the idea

of seeing him sit down to a really Scotch dinner,—he so often speaks about it. It would be quite a treat to me."

"Oh," said Bell thoughtfully, "let me see,—he's tried our potato-soup, but there's 'cockie-leekie,' an' green pea soup, an' 'hotch-potch;' and for after that a haggis an' collops, or a singed sheep's head; an' after that pancakes, an' rhubarb wi' some o' Daisy's cream."

Here Bell was interrupted, almost startled by Mr. Kirkwood's appearance and voice. He had come to call at the manse, but seeing the gathering at the outhouses, he walked quietly forward and overheard Bell's last sentence.

"Cockie-leekie?" said he—"splendid! Sheep's head broth?—glorious! I had forgotten that. Haggis and pancakes?—magnificent! Collops, and what more did you say?" Then turning to Colonel Gordon, "You laughed at me for praising the potato-soup of the manse, and here you are getting a whole catalogue of dishes. I can only say that you're vastly improved lately if you are the length of dining on such fare."

"It was for you, Kirkwood, that I was catering, not for myself," replied the Colonel; "but we must see Mrs. Barrie about the matter first."

Mr. Kirkwood found occasion, on the way to the house, to turn round twice or thrice and speak to Bell (who followed at a respectful distance) about various old-fashioned dishes, until Colonel Gordon said:

"Really, Kirkwood, don't bother my good friend with such questions. You speak as if your fortune depended on them. You make too much ado about your lower nature."

"It's not that so much as old associations; but if you had come into a strange house on a cold day, and got the potato-soup that I"—

"Stop, Kirkwood, please! Do stop,—I've heard the story fifty times," replied the Colonel.

When the gentlemen were seated in the dining-room, they felt at a loss how to invite *themselves;* but Gordie (on whose shoulder Colonel Gordon steadied himself when entering the house), did this for them by saying:

"Mamma, Mr. Kirkwood is coming here to dinner some

day, and Bell is going to make pancakes and nice, nice things for *us all.*"

"We shall be delighted to see you, gentlemen," said Mrs. Barrie, with a slight bow to each, "any day that will be most convenient." Tuesday week was fixed.

Mr. Kirkwood brought with him some champagne of special vintage, it being the only stimulant Colonel Gordon was allowed, and it was quietly handed by Dan to Bell. She, busy with her own special work, looked at the bottles, and as she had not had champagne in hand before, she said to Dan:

"Take that gold an' that string off the neck, an' I'll draw the cork, an' pit the wine into a crystal bottle to be ready."

Alas! the cork flew into Bell's face, half the wine was spilt, and she said sharply:

"Let them draw the next that likes, I'll no' fash wi't." Thereafter Mr. Kirkwood became his own butler for the day.

He was *carried away* by the cockie-leekie, to which, at his own request, he was helped twice. Everything else, especially the pancakes, increased his delight. All those at table enjoyed his evident and oft-expressed satisfaction as much as they did dinner, which, at all events, in Gordie's case, is saying a very great deal.

Mr. Kirkwood walked alongside of Colonel Gordon's chair as they went homewards,—Dan, of course, acting as propeller. When they reached a high part of the road, they halted to enjoy the prospect and breathe the cool evening air. Colonel Gordon looked at Dan, who was wiping his brow, and observing a scar on his temples, said:

"I think I have seen you in some bygone time: it's like a dream to me, but was it not you that brought a letter from my brother, many, many years ago, when I was about to sail for India? You had a patch over your eye, and told me you had got it hurt."

Dan started and said, "Please, sir, are you a brother of the Duke o' Gordon's,—toots, I beg your pardon,—Kenneth Gordon's?"

"I am," said the Colonel. "It was you, then, who brought the letter. I was sure I had seen you before.

Poor Kenneth, he was a daring fellow. Did you know him well?"

"I was one o' his oarsmen," said Dan, "but I haena seen him since the day he gied me the letter to gi'e to you—that was the day after he hid the brandy an' the tobacco in Mr. Gordon o' the Grainaries' cellar, thinkin' he could get them out next nicht; but the gaugers got scent o't, and it took us a' oor time to get off frae Dumbarton. It was then that I lost my e'e."

"Brandy! — tobacco! — excisemen after him!" said Colonel Gordon, evidently under great excitement. "Gordon of the Granaries' cellar!—are you in earnest? I'm perfectly stunned. Upon your life, tell me everything you know about this matter."

Dan did so, and pulling from the inside of his vest an old pocket-book, he showed a bit of dingy paper with some hieroglyphics upon it which none but the initiated could decipher.

"Ye understand, sir, the smugglers that I rowed the boat for had lots o' hidin'-places for their stuff, an' this was one o' the books they keepit. There, now,—that anchor wi' the five twists o' rope round it, means five kegs o' brandy; that R K inside o' the rope, means Roseneath kirkyard; that's your brither's mark, B Y D and a drawing o' a 'boyn' or tub,—it was something about the Duke o' Gordon in the north country."

"Yes," said the Colonel quickly, "Bydand is part of the Gordon crest, and Aboyne their castle;—but go on."

"Weel, here's for Gordon o' the Grainaries; a castle, that's Dumbarton;—a grainary wi' a G, that's Gordon's place; an' there's the anchor wi' five twists, an' twa tobacco-pipes made like a five; and there's the Duke's mark. An' that mark's—beggin' your pardon, Mr. Kirkwood—Ma'colm Kirkwood's;—it's a comb, an' a kirk, an' —an'—" Here Dan was interrupted by Mr. Kirkwood saying warmly:

"A gallows-tree, a wood or 'wuddie,' sure enough, for hanging smugglers on. The entries and signatures are alike suggestive."

"An'," continued Dan, "that mark o' the half-moon on

legs wi' the wings on't, means that the vera nicht ony o' the ither companies o' the gang sees't, they're to get the stuff awa' to the ither place immediately, that's markit on the paper, *if* there's twa marks o' the heid men on't, like what this has, but no' unless. An' I got the book frae the Duke o' Gordon, to tak' to anither party o' the smugglers when the hue and cry about the thing blew past. For the Duke, sir, never thocht the gaugers wad find out the stuff in the Grainaries; but they did find it, an' puir Mr. Gordon had to pay the fine, an' it ruined him; an' nobody kens till this day whae put it there, except mysel'—at least that I ken o'. I left the smugglers for gude an' a' after that."

Dan's story, corroborated as it was by the outlandish book of entries, completely unhinged both gentlemen. From Mr. Kirkwood's manner, one could have guessed that the Malcolm Kirkwood implicated had been a relative; but of that I can say nothing. With Colonel Gordon it was otherwise. When they reached Strathgowan they got all they could out of Dan, and more than they relished, for his brother's connection with smuggling was entirely new to the Colonel.

A sad interview took place at Knowe Park next day, when Mrs. Barrie told of her father's trial at law, and the ruinous fine, which not only drained his purse but broke his heart.

Colonel Gordon now understood why his brother had written him so urgently from his dying-bed to be kind to the Gordons of the Granaries, if ever he had the opportunity. He did all he now could do to atone for the grievous wrong his brother had done to Mrs. Barrie's father, by making over at once a considerable portion of his means to the family at Knowe Park.

Upon the Colonel's death, a few years after, all that he was possessed of was bequeathed to Mrs. Barrie and her family, burdened with an annuity of fifty pounds a year to Daniel Corbett, and some trifling legacies.

From the day that Dan revealed the smuggling adventure, Colonel Gordon had been kind to him, and every now and again Dan was requested by the banker to call at the bank for money. Not even going to church for the first time for

many years put Dan more about than going to the bank; the stanchelled windows monopolised his attention, and as soon as he put his cross to the receipt, he slunk out, and took a by-road home.

Where to hide the money exercised him greatly. He thought everybody knew he had it. At length, after wrapping it well in old paper, and stuffing the parcel into an old game-bag, he put it under a flag of the floor, upon which Burke lay. The money contributed little to his personal comfort, but he occasionally helped his poorer neighbours. Bell tried to get something from him for the cause of foreign missions. His answer was barely civil: "Send siller to the niggers! no' very likely!" Dan's nature was secretive; few could make anything of him, none much to boast of, for on all emotional subjects he was "cabined, cribbed, confined."

The Free Church of Blinkbonny heard with mingled feelings, chiefly of deep regret, that the "Wishart" church in Edinburgh was resolved to call Mr. Barrie to be their pastor. Many of us knew he was highly appreciated in places where he occasionally preached, and that his appearances in synods and assemblies had brought him into favourable notice; but although we were gratified to hear strangers express themselves as astonished that he should be allowed to remain in Blinkbonny, the idea of his really leaving us was never seriously entertained.

Colonel Gordon's unexpected gift had added very materially to Mr. Barrie's comfort, in so far as it enabled him to do more for the education of his children than the "equal dividend" of the Free Church alone could provide; and he had tried to prevent a call coming out in his favour.

He was, however, overborne by the urgent solicitations, not only of the Wishart congregation, but even more so by fathers and brethren in the ministry, who pressed him very closely to accept the call to Edinburgh. Mrs. Barrie, on whose judgment he relied more implicitly than on that of all others put together, declined to express any opinion on the subject. She was pleased that her husband's gifts were appreciated, and felt that benefits to the Church, as well as to the family, were likely to result from his translation to

Edinburgh. On the other hand, she liked Blinkbonny, and had heard of the heavy calls and frequent worries of a city charge; so, as she could not make up her mind which *she* would prefer, she remained neutral, although not at all reticent.

Mr. Barrie and she talked the matter fully over, looking at it on all sides, and she entered patiently and minutely into all the pros and cons, sometimes much to his confusion; for she did this so evenly that it merely assisted his judgment, but did not at all influence his decision.

About this time the "Ecclesiastical Titles Bill" was absorbing public attention, and the Churches in Scotland entered on a feverish crusade against the Church of Rome. The deputation which appeared before the presbytery to prosecute the call to Mr. Barrie dwelt largely on this subject. I have already referred to Mr. Barrie's deeply-rooted aversion to matters of this nature. On this occasion he spoke very strongly, much to the surprise, if not to the dissatisfaction, of the Edinburgh representatives.

He declared as his conviction that spasmodic agitation of this kind was of no practical use. It oftener resulted in harm than good. There was much in the Romish Church he disliked and condemned, but there was also much that he respected,—its zeal, its energy, its stand for liberty and learning in the Dark Ages, its success in reaching the very poorest and keeping hold of them. Great injustice was often done by ignorant tirade, or exaggerated misrepresentation of certain tenets. To enter into either explanation or refutation, or, worse still, denunciation of Mariolatry, Transubstantiation, etc., to a Protestant audience was unedifying, to say the least of it. If the fiery zeal directed against Popery were applied to preaching and *living* the gospel, it would be better for the minister, the people, and the world; and unless he greatly changed his mind, he would not meet the wishes of the deputation in that matter. He, however, reserved his decision till next meeting of presbytery.

One reverend Edinburgh brother was present, on whom the no-Popery cry had taken an excessively firm hold; it was the only subject which warmed him at all, but it made

him furious, and formed part of every discourse he preached, until many of his hearers said, "they couldna sleep in the kirk noo;" and one of his elders affirmed that "he was aye pop-pop-poperyin' away; an' if he pop-popery's mickle mair, I'll no' pop back to hear him."

This deputy tried to reply to Mr. Barrie, but Mr. Taylor said "it was like Dandie Dinmont laying about him wi' a flail on thrashed straw—plenty o' exercise an' stour, but nae wark dune; muckle cry an' little woo' [wool], as the," etc. At next meeting of presbytery Mr. Barrie accepted the call to Edinburgh.

In contemplating a change of residence, it is possible that Bell might have been one of Mrs. Barrie's difficulties, for life in a town would not suit her at all. What would she do without Daisy? for so all her cows were named, prefixed in order to distinguish them by the colour of each, so that Bell had had during her stay in Blinkbonny a brown Daisy, a black Daisy, etc., and now she had a ginger Daisy. Could she do without the garden, and especially the hens? No.

Bell had been rather a thought to Mrs. Barrie for some time past. Not that she had failed or flagged—she was as "eident" [industrious], honest, and excellent as ever; but Mrs. Barrie had observed, that after the meetings of the elders at the manse were over, David Tait of Blackbrae made for the kitchen lobby, not the front one, as the others did. She also noticed, after this had gone on for a while, that if the other elders took the same road, Bell did not talk with them as long as she used to do, but found some sudden engagement outside the manse, and David and she generally re-entered the kitchen together, as soon as the others were fairly away.

David had a small farm about a mile and a half from Blinkbonny. His widowed mother had died lately. He was a canny, intelligent man, in good worldly circumstances, or, to use the Scotch phrase, "a bien man, but very blate" [diffident].

Betwixt Mrs. Barrie and Bell there were no secrets, and she often asked Bell if Mr. Tait and she were making any progress in the way of marriage. "None whatever,'

was Bell's general reply. "He's a nice man an' a gude cracker, but he never evened [hinted at] marriage to me."

One day Bell told Mrs. Barrie, with a gleeful face which belied her words, "that David had met wi' a queer misfortune."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Bell; what has happened? You seem to laugh rather than lament over it," said Mrs. Barrie, with evident concern.

"Oh, mem, it's a kind o' laughable tae," said Bell. "Last Sabbath day he was takin' a lesson on the Bible before he cam' to the kirk, an' as it's late afore he gets hame, he was eatin' a bit piece; it was a warm mornin', an' he was sittin' on a seat in front o' his hoose. Weel, ane o' the calves got out o' the pen, an' he lays down his Bible an' his piece, an' gangs to put in the calf. There was a soo gaun about the close [farm-court], an' it snappit up David's piece that was lying on the Bible; and it not only took the piece, but it ate a' the Second Corinthians and a gude deal o' the First. He's very ill about it; he's baith vexed an' affrontit about it."

"It was very provoking," said Mrs. Barrie; "the sooner you become mistress of Blackbrae the better."

Mrs. Barrie had hitherto spoken to Bell about David's attentions more in joke than in earnest, until she knew that Mr. Barrie had decided to accept the call to Edinburgh. As David's visits were becoming more frequent as well as longer, without seeming to come to anything definite, she resolved to give her worthy friends a little help. One night, when David was in the kitchen, Mrs. Barrie went "ben," and after the usual courtesies had been exchanged, said, "Mr. Tait, I see that you are determined to take Bell away to Blackbrae, reason or none, and I wish you much joy; a wife like Bell is a prize not to be got every day, and you may consider yourself lucky to have won her. I shall go about another servant to-morrow, although I never expect to get one equal to Bell. You must never think about waiting till the term. Marriages break all terms; indeed, if you will take my advice, the marriage should be *very* soon."

Bell was quite unprepared for such plain speaking; her

stocking wires went very fast, and she did not know where to look. Mrs. Barrie turning towards her, said:

"Bell, get everything ready as soon as you can, so that we may come out to see you once or twice after you are fairly settled at Blackbrae, before the long autumn nights set in:" adding, what had never been said by her before, "You need not come to worship to-night, Bell, as you two will have a very great deal to speak about. So good-night, and good speed to you both."

If they had a good deal to say, they were very long of beginning. Bell's wires went faster than ever—they actually made a clicking sound, and her heart went even faster than her wires. But David's honest heart went faster than either; he looked sideways, then downwards, and fidgeted about, for his

> "Heart it went dunt upon dunt,
> Till he thocht every dunt it wad crack it."

At length he said, "I'm a' sweatin'," which was a mild way of putting it, for he was glowing and tingling from head to foot.

Bell looked fixedly, stolidly, at the stocking she was knitting, but uttered not a word.

At length David summoned courage to say:

"Will Mrs. Barrie really gang after anither servant the morn, d'ye think, Bell?"

"She's a woman o' her word; she aye does what she says."

"Weel, Bell," said David with a sigh.

"Weel, David," said Bell sympathetically.

"What d'ye think, Bell?"

"What dae you think, David?"

"I dinna ken what to think."

"Neither div I," said Bell; and there was a short pause, during which the ticking of the clock seemed unusually loud, and both heads began to move to each tick.

At length David took heart:

"We're fairly in for't noo, Bell," said he with a sigh; "an' after a', Bell, do you no' think we micht risk it?"

"It's a very serious business, David, very; it is."

"It's a' that, very indeed; but," he added in his most

persuasive tone, "ye'll no' say No, Bell. The fac' is, we daurna stop now, so we'll just say it's settl't."

"I wad need some time to think it o'er," was the reply.

"Certainly," said David, brightening up; "quite richt, certainly; think weel o'er't, Bell; tak' time, plenty o' time to think on't. I'll come doun some other nicht afore lang. There's luck in leisure, as the auld sayin' is."

David's idea of plenty of time was wider than Bell's. Every night for ten nights she had kept the kitchen, if possible, brighter, and herself "redd up;" she had also looked oftener in the looking-glass (it was an irregular fragment of a larger one stuck on the facing of the window) during that time than she had done for twelve months before, and her cap or "mutch" was something extra even for her. As each evening fell she looked often and wistfully up the Blackbrae road. After ten days had passed she felt a little nervous, and put herself in Dan's way, to ask him, after some leading questions, if he had been at Blackbrae lately. She had still to wait other three days as best she could, but at the fortnight's end

"The braw wooer cam' doun the lang glen."

Both were "blate." Other subjects were tried and skimmed over, but *the* subject was not broached. Had it not been for a noise in the lobby caused by Mrs. Barrie's going up-stairs, it might have been another fortnight or more before any progress was made; but, fearing that she might come into the kitchen after coming down again, David blurted out hurriedly:

"Bell, Bell, have ye been thinkin' on yon?"

"Yes, yes," said Bell, with considerable modulation of voice.

"An' I do most sincerely hope ye'll say Yes," said David warmly; "I canna see for the life o' me how ever we can face Mrs. Barrie till it's a' settled."

Bell had carefully composed what she thought a proper answer, and during the fortnight she had repeated it "a hunder" times to herself; but when it was wanted it would neither come into her head nor to her tongue. She was greatly annoyed, even ashamed, at herself about this, but

her honest heart and good sense came to her help, and guided by them she made a much better reply than that she had hoarded so long and lost so suddenly; for she rose, gave David her hand, and said:

"David, there's my hand, an' my heart gangs wi't; they're baith yours," solemnly looking him straight in the face. He smiled, and then of course she smiled, and turning away her face, for she was blushing crimson, she added, "Eh, sirs, I never wad 'a thocht—wha ever wad 'a thocht o' me being marrit? David, isna the ways o' Providence strange and mysterious?"

"'Deed ay, Bell; but arena they whiles real pleasant tae?"

"Ye may say that, David, for I've liked ye lang, an' wonder't if ever it wad come to this; an' oh, David, I CAN lippen [trust] till ye perfectly wi' a' my heart."

"That's the way to speak, Bell; that's wiselike. I'll dae my vera best to make you comfortable."

"So will I you, David—we'll baith dae our best; an' if we hae God's blessin' I think we'll dae fine."

A happier couple could not have been found that night, for love makes people younger if not young.

Shortly after all was settled, David hummed rather than sung, lest he should be heard in the parlour, a favourite song of his, which, whatever we may think of its applicability to one whom we have hitherto known as a staid, solid woman like Bell, seemed to David "a very bonnie sang—he was aye catchin' himsel' sing-singin' at it, an' it really was not far off what he thocht himsel';" and douce Bell (although she said "stuff an' nonsense" when he had finished) turned a willing ear to the song, and nodded to herself in the looking-glass during the singing of it. If she did not apply the whole to herself, she evidently did not absolutely discard it all.

THE BLACK-E'ED LASSIE (BY CHARLES GRAY).

AIR—"*My only jo and dearie, O.*"

"Wi' heart sincere I love thee, Bell,
But dinna ye be saucy, O!
Or a' my love I winna tell
To thee, my black-e'ed lassie, O!

It's no' thy cheeks o' rosy hue,
It's no' thy little cherry mou',
It's a' because thy heart's sae true,
My bonnie black-e'ed lassie, O!

"It's no' the witch glance o' thy e'e,
Though few for that surpass ye, O!
That mak's ye aye sae dear to me,
My bonnie black-e'ed lassie, O!
It's no' the whiteness o' thy skin,
It's no' love's dimple on thy chin,
It's a' thy modest worth within,
My bonnie black-e'ed lassie, O!

"Ye smile sae sweet, ye look sae kind
That a' wish to caress ye, O!
But O! how I admire thy mind,
My bonnie black-e'ed lassie, O!
I've seen thine e'en, like crystal clear,
Shine dimly through soft pity's tear;
These are the charms that mak' thee dear
To me, my black-e'ed lassie, O!"

When David had finished the song, Bell said with a broad grin, "I never could sing but the ae sang o' the 'Bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond,' an' it's raither waefu' for the noo; but there's a verse I pickit up frae Gordie—he's gaun to be a grand singer, Gordie; I'll miss him, maybe—but at ony rate the sang's been at my tongue-end for a while, an' d'ye ken, David, I think it's you an' me to a nothing?

'I lo'ed ne'er a laddie but ane!'

that's me, ony way:

'He lo'ed ne'er a lassie but me,
An' he's willing to mak' me his ain,
And his ain I am willing to be;'

that's me tae."

"That's grand, Bell, that's just exactly the very thing, the very thing, *the very thing*—that's the 'head-sheaf.'"

After this ramble on "Parnassus," which generally immediately follows newly-plighted troths, they settled down to a sober crack. David gave a description of his farm and stock, in which he was often interrupted by questions from Bell; very practical all of them were, and specially

gratifying to David. It was surprising how much she got out of him in a quiet way. But I will neither tarry over the details, nor say how long they sat, nor how they parted; I will only state that after David had risen to leave, they stood a long time and talked on. He said something about getting the house "gi'en a bit sort up," but Bell said:

"Dinna fash mickle wi't, David; tradesfolk often tak' a lang time when they get in. When we are settled, we can do a' that far better oursel's after we see what's what."

From this night Bell seldom spoke of "*I*'ll do this, or *I* think that," but it was, "*We*'ll put a' richt—*we*'ll consider't —*we'll* MANAGE 't."

She did not tell Mrs. Barrie directly of her engagement, but it could not be hidden. Bell's face was itself a tell-tale, and next forenoon she was asking Mrs. Barrie's advice on various subjects far removed at once from her household concerns, and from anything likely to require her consideration as a servant.

Early in the afternoon Bell asked Mrs. Barrie, with an unusual timidity, almost a sheepishness of manner, if she would be so kind as to sell her "some o' the black currants, noo that a' the jam was made for the house?"

Mrs. Barrie took both Bell's hands in hers, looked into her face with a smile of intense delight, to the dumbfounderment [confusion] of poor Bell, who tried in vain to restrain her grins and blushes.

"Bell, Bell, as you yourself often say, 'the cat's out o' the pock'—fairly out now. Allow me first to give both hands a good shake and wish you very much joy. I'm very, very glad for your sake, my good, kind Bell. May all that's good attend you and Mr. Tait. I shall have a great deal more to say to you afterwards, but I must run and tell Mr. Barrie."

'There's somebody wi' him in the study the noo, mem," said Bell; "an' oh! if you please, dinna say much to me about this marrying business the day. I'm baith like to laugh and to greet about it yet, an' I canna find words to thank you, far less Mr. Barrie wi'; so excuse me." Then, after a short pause, "Will ye sell me the berries, mem?"

"Sell, Bell? Sell to you! *sell* you what's more yours

than mine! If I did not know you well, I should be both vexed and angry at you; but it's like yourself, Bell. Please, never ask me about any such things; take them. I shall help you all I can to get everything ready and in good order. As to the currants and gooseberries, you must allow me to give you the sugar, and be sure to fill every empty jelly-pot in the house."

"Ye're ower kind, mem, far ower kind."

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "don't say that again, for that is what I can never be. But Mr. Barrie is disengaged now, and I must bring him in,"—which she did, and Bell and they got it over, not without some signs of strong emotion which each tried to hide, but none were ashamed to feel, for the bond of twenty years' faithful service was to them a cord not easily broken, and to Bell a retrospect of intense satisfaction. A vision of her life-history passed before her, which may be summed up in the following lines:

> "An orphan was she, and they had been gude till her;
> Sure that was the thing brocht the tear to her e'e."

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER MARRIAGE AND HOME-COMING.

"Noo they're crouse and canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't."

Burns.

THE "Forms of Procedure" in the translation of a Scottish Presbyterian minister are somewhat elaborate, and require a good deal of time for the various stages of intimating, citing and hearing parties, sustaining and transmitting the call, and summoning the congregation to appear to answer the reasons for translation. When the call is sustained, time is allowed for the minister's decision; after this has been given, other matters of law or custom have to be gone through, so that, should the autumn season intervene, when presbytery meetings are only held for cases of extreme urgency, several months may elapse between the "call" and the "settlement."

It was so in Mr. Barrie's case; but in a small place like Blinkbonny, little things, that would in large towns be "lost in the crowd," are found and founded on to an extent much beyond their intrinsic importance. This must be my apology for stating that the regret at the prospect of Mr. Barrie's leaving was counterbalanced to a certain extent by the announcement of Bell's approaching marriage.

Under ordinary circumstances Bell would have been and was a "fixture,"—so much so that for years past she had been universally called Bell Barrie, and the idea that she would ever be married was unborn. Hitherto the Edinburgh call had been looked upon entirely in its public aspect as affecting the Free Church of Blinkbonny, and little thought had been expended on the private view of the matter. It was

taken for granted that the family would remove to Edinburgh; and Bell had so long been part of it, as much so as either Mr. or Mrs. Barrie, that, while she was indirectly included in the feeling of general regret, she did not form a distinct element in the case.

When, therefore, it became known that she was to be married to David Tait of Blackbrae, I may affirm without exaggeration that the news was received with heartfelt delight. All who had come much into contact with Bell esteemed her highly, and those who knew her best liked her most. Her unwearied industry, her sterling worth, her kindly charity, her humility and strong common sense, had been quietly appreciated. Indeed, she was so unostentatious and natural, and her good qualities were so universally known, that they were seldom dwelt upon.

Bell was surprised, and not a little annoyed, at the number of folks who came to congratulate her upon her approaching marriage; it would have pleased her much better had nothing been said about it.

"The place is like a gaun fair," said she to David, "mornin', noon, an' nicht. I canna get on wi' my wark for folk comin' wishin' me this an' that. Nae doubt a body likes to be likit, but no' aye to be tell'd it. Mr. Taylor said the best thing, an' he stayed a very short time; a' he said was, 'Gi'e me a shake o' your hand, Bell; I'm a wee feared ye'll no' escape the woe.'

"'The woe!' said I; 'Mr. Taylor, what woe? That's a queer kind o' backin' to gi'e tae a gude wish.'

"'Bell,' said he, 'the Bible says, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," an' that's what a'body's sayin' o' you the noo.'

"'I'm maybe no' as grateful as I should be,' says I, 'but I wish they wadna speak about me at a', for if they kent me as weel as I ken mysel', they wadna speak as they dae; as gude auld George Brown used to say, "The best o' men were but men at the best," an' women's just sic-like. I've been but an unprofitable servant baith to God an' man, although I think I may say that I try to do my best.'

"Says he, 'That's the richt way to tak' thae things, Bell. Haud on; naebody ever stack in the world but Lot's wife,

an' she wad 'a gotten through fine, if she had held straight on as she was well tell't, an' no' lookit back. There's nothing like makin' the shortcomin's o' the past warnin's, an' the mercies o' the past encouragements.'"

"But, Bell," said David, "wha d'ye think wished me weel in this matter? Ye'll never guess—there's mony mair forbye him, but nae less than Sir John M'Lelland came ane's errant to the hoose, an' he did gi'e you a flamin' character. Ae thing he said was, 'Scotland's a grand place to dee in, for a'body speaks weel o' the deid; but it's the warst place to get marrit in, for if there's a hair to clash about, they'll make a tether o't,'—at least that was his meanin' if no' the vera words,—an' he said he wad defy mortal to say onything but gude o' you."

"It's because he disna ken ony better," said Bell; "but I'm obleeged till him; may we baith be respeckit by richt-thinkin' kind o' folk; we maun try tae deserve it."

David continued: "Sir John tell'd me no' an ill story about himsel'. No lang after he was marrit, he took his leddy to see auld Ailsie Ferguson, his henwife. Ailsie beckit [curtsied] an' bowed to the leddy, an' wished her a' that was gude; then she turned to Sir John an' wished him the same, sayin' that she was blythe to serve such a beautifu', handsome leddy, only she wad 'a likit if she had been bigger.'

"'Bigger!' said Sir John; 'why do you wish that, Ailsie? It seems a singular sort of compliment.'

"'Oh, Sir John,' said Ailsie, 'they say that you got her wecht [weight] in gold wi' her, and of course the bigger she was the mair ye wad hae gotten.'"

"Very good for Ailsie," said Bell, "very good. Her an' me was weel acquaint."

A movement was set afoot to give Bell a present, and subscriptions were readily got from all classes, irrespective of church and other distinction or connection. More difficulty was found in determining how to expend the money than in collecting it. Betty Kellock's was perhaps the best proposal:

"Gi'e Bell the hard siller; she'll gar't gang farther, and ware it better than ony o' us."

The proposals were so many and various, that ultimately Mrs. Barrie had to be consulted. She quietly sounded Bell, who would only listen after she found she could not get out of it, and the result was that a "Paisley shawl" (I think it was also called a Paisley plaid, a "harness" plaid) and a china tea-set were procured.

A meeting of lady subscribers was held in the manse dining-room. As Dr. Stevenson insisted on being admitted, he made the presentation, in what was reported to me as "a real neat wee speech." Bell's reply was declared by those present to have been "beautiful;" even Miss Park said it was very becoming and most creditable for a person in Bell's position. The only fragment of it I could pick up was that "she would not presume to invite ladies in their station to her plain hoose, but if ony o' them would be kind enough to come, she wad hansel the teapot wi' a' her heart." Dr. Stevenson said, "Remember, Bell, you'll need to give me a *cinder* in my last cup."

Bell did not know that the "cinder" the Doctor referred to meant whisky. She looked puzzled, hospitably puzzled, and said, "A cinder, Doctor! a cinder in your hinmost cup? The coals are unco assy [very ashy] hereabouts, an' it micht break the cup; but when a' ither folks are served, I could drop ane into the teapot if that would please ye."

"I'll drop it in myself, Bell, if you'll either give me the key of the cupboard, or put the bottle on the table," said the Doctor. "The cinder I mean will not burn a cork; it's 'barley tea' or 'barley bree,' or plainly, whisky."

Mrs. Barrie gave Bell as her personal present a brooch of large dimensions, containing locks of the hair of all the family;—Wee Nellie's was in the middle. On the back of the gift was engraved: "From Mrs. Barrie to Isabella Cameron—July 1851. 'The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me,' Ruth i. 8."

Bell was neither romantic, nor sentimental, nor demonstrative, but when she read the inscription, she kissed the brooch again, and again, and again, and every night for some weeks she often took it from under her pillow, and pressed it to her lips and to her heart.

Mr. Barrie's present was a Bible in two volumes, and he

was bewildered among the number of texts he would *like* to write on them.

"My dear," said he to Mrs. Barrie, "I have spent some hours in considering what to write on Bell's Bible, and have not yet decided, so many texts seem suitable. In the first place, I should like to write the last twenty-one verses of the Book of Proverbs. I have just been reading these, and it seems to me that the writer might have had Bell before him when he wrote them. They remind me of the new-fashioned pictures taken by the sun now-a-days, called 'daguerreotypes,' invented by a Frenchman called Daguerre. Could anything more accurately descriptive of even plain homely Bell be imagined than 'the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,'—'do him good and not evil all the days of his life,'—'worketh willingly with her hands,'—'*considereth* a field and buyeth it,'—'reacheth forth her hand to the needy,'—'in her tongue is the law of kindness,'—'looketh well to the ways of her household,'—'eateth not the bread of idleness,' and so on.

"My dear," added he, laying one hand on the Bible, "that is an old Book,—THE old Book,—but its references to human life—the lower as well as the higher—are as applicable to the life of to-day as they were to that of two thousand years ago. The reading of these verses in the circumstances, and with the object I have in view, has delighted me; I think I never felt so irresistibly convinced that they were written by *Him* who knew what was in man, and what would suit mankind for all time."

Mr. Barrie also showed her a long list of other texts: "A succourer of many, and of myself also,"—"who bestowed much labour on us,"—"in labours more abundant, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often," etc. He almost grudged Mrs. Barrie her quotation from Ruth, but he took part of the 12th verse of the second chapter, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel," as also the blessing of the tribes in Numbers vi. 24–26: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," and other passages,

until the front fly-leaves of both volumes were fairly covered.

Bell was immensely pleased with this gift, and the volumes occupied the place of honour on the small back table in the "room" at Blackbrae.

The very important question of the marriage gown—Bell never got the length of a dress—was confined to matters of colour and fabric; the shape was to be her "invariable." The dressmaker asked her if she would like it to be made "low-bodied," for bare necks and arms were in vogue for dress occasions at that time.

"What d'ye mean by 'low-bodied'?" said Bell. "D'ye mean lang tails that I would need to haud up for fear o' their trailing amang the mud? That I'll never wear; mak' it just like this every way." *This* only reached to the ankles, and was, as all her "kirk-claes" were, of douce black.

"Oh," said the dressmaker, "I meant, would you like a bare neck and arms? These are in fashion for dress occasions at present."

Bell looked indignantly at her, and said, "Hoo dare you speak o' sic heathenish fal-de-rals to me? Bare neck and arms! I think I see mysel'!" She was quickly quieted by the dressmaker's gentle reply, that she was merely inquiring, not proposing such a thing; for she had yesterday to fit an elderly lady who would have a "low-bodied."

"There's nae fules like auld fules, they say. Black's no' lucky to get married in, so I've ta'en a red merino, an' mak' it as ye've aye done my goons. An' be sure an' send me the bits that's ower—they micht come usefu'; an' as I'll no' aye hae somebody to 'hook my back' where I'm gaun, pit on gude big hooks an' gude wide eyes."

Dresses in those days were fastened by hooks and eyes at the back, and many a firm "yerk" it took to make them meet when done by the wearer alone. The words may seem strange to younger readers, but older householders will remember the familiar sound of "Hook my back."

Bell wished to postpone the marriage until the flitting to Edinburgh was over, but Mrs. Barrie would not hear of this; so the earliest possible day was fixed, Bell being

determined first to get Blackbrae all right, and then to see Mrs. Barrie settled in Edinburgh.

Bell found a "best-maid" in Mary Barrie, now a handsome young lady of eighteen. Besides having had a good education, she had the not less important advantage of a thorough training in household work from her mother and Bell. She was a sweet-tempered, charming girl, and entered into the preparations for Bell's marriage with great spirit,—so much so that she became Bell's adviser or rather confidante, and put her head, her hands, and her heart into the work.

Mr. Tait, the schoolmaster, whose examination occupied part of an earlier chapter, was "best-man."

James Barrie, now a promising young student, heard Mary wondering who would give away the bride, and expressed to Mrs. Barrie his desire to do so; but his mother thought he was too young, and intended to request Mr. Taylor, when another applicant for the honour appeared.

David, the day after Bell and he had arranged the marriage, called for his nephew the teacher, and "trysted" him to act as best-man at the marriage: and having occasion to call upon Mr. Walker on parish business, he was the first to tell the worthy minister of his uncle's happy prospects.

I have omitted to mention that Mr. Walker was a skilful player on the violin; his general instrument, indeed, was the violoncello, "the bass fiddle"—possibly because it was more solemn and ministerial-looking than the "wee fiddle;" and he had few equals in playing Scotch music of all kinds.

When told of David Tait's approaching marriage with Bell, he started to his feet in an ecstasy of delight, threw up his arms, and said:

"What! Bell Barrie married — David Tait married! Bell Barrie married to David Tait—David Tait married to Bell! That is news! grand news! The best I've heard for many a day;" and after a right hearty laugh, he added:

"That is *news!* He's a decent, honest, sterling man, your uncle, Mr. Tait—a great friend of mine" (Mr. Walker's forte was friendliness—his heart was larger than his head); "a fine, a very fine man. Then Bell; Bell's a—it beats me to tell what Bell is. She's the cleverest an' best servant in

Blinkbonny; but she's more—she's—she's Bell Barrie, and that's the pink o' perfection for a farmer's wife. She's a tocher in hersel'. Bell for a manager—Bell for a garden, or hens, or cows, or cookin'! Excuse me, Mr. Tait, I cannot refrain from expressing my delight. I'll need to try the fiddle, and see if it will quiet me. Bell mistress o' Blackbrae! They're made for each other. It never struck me before, but it's perfection."

He took the "wee" fiddle from its peg in the study, and marched up and down playing almost furiously several old Scotch tunes, and occasionally singing a line or a few words of some of them, such as "A thrifty quean was Kate Dalrymple," "We're a' gaun to the waddin', Lassie, will ye gae?" "Hey the bonnie! ho the bonnie! hey the bonnie breastknots!" "Dainty Davie," "Fy, let us a' to the bridal," and finished up by playing "Auld langsyne," with exquisite feeling.

Next day Mr. Walker called for Bell, and volunteered to "give her away." His kind offer was accepted with becoming thanks, Bell declaring "that it was far ower kind, —that she never could have expected to hae been countenanced in the way she had been by a'body, but really this was the greatest compliment of all." And when the wedding guests were met in Knowe Park, in walked worthy Mr. Walker, his sonsy face beaming with delight, arm in arm with Bell, whom he placed by the side of David with quite a "Sir Roger de Coverley" grace. Bell, when referring to this memorable act of attention on Mr. Walker's part, used to say, "Mr. Walker oxtered me in his ainsel', and he was a fine buirdly man to cleek."

The knot was soon tied by Mr. Barrie, "assisted by Mr. Walker;" and Mr. Barrie, whose prerogative it was to be the first to congratulate the happy couple, at the close of the ceremony shook hands with the newly-made wife, and said, "Mrs. Tait, I wish you great happiness, and every blessing in your married life."

Bell was demure, and had not lifted her eyes from the ground till now, but this roused her, and she said:

"Oh! Mr. Barrie," looking earnestly into his face, "ca' me Bell, dinna ca' me Mrs. Tait."

Mrs. Barrie followed, and also said "Mrs Tait," etc.

"Mrs. Barrie," said Bell softly and imploringly, "if you please, mem, oh! dinna *you* ca' me Mrs. Tait."

Mr. Walker was number three who called her Mrs. Tait, and she remonstrated with him likewise:

"Oh, Maister Walker, Maister Walker, dinna Mrs. Tait me—I canna thole't."

He made one of his little jokes—"To-night be Mrs. Tait, but seeing you rebel, we will re-*Bell* you to-morrow."

"That's no' bad," said David. These were the first words, other than those required during the ceremony, he had uttered since he entered the room.

A "towsie tea," or "tea and eating," followed the ceremony. Mary and the schoolmaster cut up the brides-cake, and, to Bell's great delight, Gordie got the ring. Mr. Barrie made a short happy speech, but Bell broke down in the middle of it. Mr. Walker also said a little about both David and Bell; she brightened up as he referred to her "Black Daisy," and all were put into excellent humour by his reference to "Braidnebs."

When tea was over, Bell, forgetting her new position, started to collect the crockery, intending to put all right before she went away. Mrs. Barrie did not protest against Bell's singular procedure, but followed her to the kitchen, and after again wishing her everything that was good, she said:

"Bell,"—not Mrs. Tait, greatly to Bell's delight,—"I understand that the young men of the village intend to give Mr. Tait and you a noisy convoy. I think you should slip away quietly, so as to get to Blackbrae before they assemble at the manse."

The hint was taken. The couple set off alone—not, however, until Gordie made David's back feel the weight of an old slipper with which he had armed himself, and applied with right good-will. Those of the manse who intended to take part in the "home-coming" allowed about half an hour to elapse before they started for Blackbrae.

David's sister and a few neighbours were greatly surprised when the "happy pair" arrived earlier than was expected—and alone. Indeed, David and Bell, or rather Mr. and Mrs.

Tait, appeared at the door of the "room" before the table was "set," causing Mrs. Brunton, David's sister, to stand aghast when she saw them.

"Preserve us a'," said she, "what's brocht ye sae sune? I wasna lookin' for ye for an hour yet, an' it'll never dae to come into the house without gettin' the lucky cake broken o'er your heid, Bell. Ye'll need tae gang out again till the lave [rest] comes, for I'm no' gaun to crown ye wi't till the best-man an' the best-maid's here,—it wadna be canny [safe]; forbye [besides] it wadna be wiselike to break the infar-cake[1] till there's some wanters and swankies [unmarried females and nimble young men] to scram'le for't; so, Bell, David and you'll just need to gang into the garden or through the parks till the lave comes."

David said, "We'll dae nae sic things," and Bell said, "It makes nae matter about the infar-cake; it's jist an auld superstition about it's no' bein' lucky not to hae't richt broken, or about dreamin' ower bits o't to ken wha's to marry you."

But Mrs. Brunton was immoveable on the point, and they had to submit.

The time, however, was not lost: David showed Bell the cows, the live stock, and the steading. They had half finished their survey of the garden when the Knowe Park contingent came up; and the couple were convoyed into the house in a style quite to Mrs. Brunton's mind. The infar-cake was duly broken over Bell's head, and the old doggerel rhyme repeated:

> "Welcome to your ain fireside—
> Health and wealth attend the bride!
> Wanters[1] noo your true weird[2] make—
> Joes[3] are spaed[4] by th' infar-cake."

When the young lads of the village gathered about the manse to give Bell and David a kindly but rough token of their respect, they were sadly disappointed to find themselves too late. The spoiling of their expected "ploy"

[1] *Infar*,—the entertainment made for the reception of the bride in the bridegroom's house.

[1] Unmarried. [2] Fate. [3] Sweethearts. [4] Foretold.

[innocent frolic] irritated them, and the more thoughtless determined to go to Blackbrae and play tricks upon David, or, as the ringleaders expressed it, "they wad gie him't for this." They returned to the village for a creel, a fishwife's basket, with which to "creel" the new "gudeman,"—a custom now unknown, but common forty years ago.

In earlier days I have witnessed very rude conduct when rough and "drouthy" neighbours put the creel upon the young husband's shoulders, as soon as he appeared outside, the day after the marriage, and roughly jostled him until his wife came out, kissed him, and produced the "whisky bottle." While the custom was dying out, such extremes were not practised. The husband got the creel put on his back, with some weight in it (sometimes a boy, sometimes a pig, but oftener a few stones), and the whisky was greedily drained by the creelers to "your very good health and the mistress's," but the young wife did not need to appear.

Dan chanced to overhear some of the more fiery spirits concocting schemes to annoy his friends at Blackbrae. He went home as quickly as he could, "loosed" his ferocious, bandy-legged, ugly (not in Dan's eyes, for he thought him a beauty, just a perfect picture) bull-dog, Burke, took a short cut through the fields, carrying with him a huge "flail" used for threshing corn, and sat down on the "loupin'-on stane"—a stone at the side of Blackbrae farm-yard gate used when mounting on horseback.

Dan was leisurely smoking his black cutty-pipe, Burke sitting at his right side, collared and chained, the chain being wound round Dan's arm, and the flail lying against the wall of the farm-shed at his left, when the Blinkbonny lads, who had been merrily discussing the plan of attack as they came along, turned from the main road into Blackbrae farm road.

Rarely has a crowd of sturdy young fellows looked as cowed or as cowardly as these when they saw Dan. He seemed provokingly unconscious of the change of aspect which took place when they observed him, and said in a familiar, off-hand way, with the pipe still in his cheek, "It's a fine summer nicht for a walk this."

Burke was not quite so neighbourly, for he growled,

and oggled, and strained his chain so wildly that the crowd instinctively fell back.

Dan addressed Burke quietly and kindly. "What ails ye, Burke? They's a' our ain folk, come out for a mouthfu' o' fresh air. Tak' things canny, Burke,—ye needna carry on as if there was mischief gaun on; they's a' friends o' yours, an' mine, an' Blackbrae's, and they're come out to wish him and the new mistress weel."

Some of the wilder spirits then began to chaff Dan.

"When did you turn a special constable, Dan? Ye're the last man that ou wad 'a thocht wad hae spoilt oor fun."

"No' me," said Dan, "as mickle fun as ye like—tak' yer fill o't. Whare wad folk hae daffin' [diversion] if no' at a waddin'? Be ceevil, an' dinna work mischeef, an' naebody'll find fau't wi' ye."

Dan wound up Burke's chain, shouldered the flail, and headed the crowd till it reached the front door. David came out frankly and thanked the visitors for the compliment. Bell also came to the door in reply to a call for the "mistress." And Mrs. Brunton followed with a bottle of whisky (pardon the truth, ye teetotallers, for so it was wont in Blinkbonny in those days), and said, "Come awa', some o' ye, an' drink the couple's health."

None of the young men answered the invitation. After a pause Dan stepped forward and said, "Will ony o' you haud ma doug, and I'll drink their healths?"

There was no reply. "Then keep quiet and dinna cheer till I tell ye, for Burke's a wee roused. I'm no' as keen o' whisky as I've seen me; I can either tak' it or want it." Then taking the glass in his hand, he said, "Here's t'ye, Mr. Tait, an' here's to the mistress,—baith your very gude healths, an' may a' that's gude befa' you," and drained it at a draught.

"Noo," said he, "come awa', some mair o' ye, an' drink luck to Blackbrae, and after ye're dune we'll gi'e them a cheer."

Very few answered Dan's invitation. When no other could be prevailed upon to do so, Dan said, "Noo dinna cheer till I grup Burke by the collar; the chain micht snap." He then wound the chain round his arm, stooped

down, and held Burke firmly. The dog seemed to be greatly affronted, for he tugged, and strained, and bayed. When Dan got him fairly in hand, he said, "Now, lads, cheer awa'; gi'e our *young* (?) friends" (here the crowd was unmannerly, and broke out into "Oh-oh-YOUNG? ho-ho") "a real hearty cheer." This was done. Burke joined in the noise if he did not help the melody, and trailed or harled Dan a few yards nearer the crowd. David stepped forward and again thanked them. Another cheer followed, and all were in grand fettle, when a voice (luckily from some unrecognisable throat at the back of the crowd) cried out, "Three cheers for 'Auld Braidnebs.'"

"What!" said Dan sharply; "wha dared to say that?" and he made for the flail, which he reached with difficulty, as Burke seemed determined to charge the crowd. Bell saw that Dan was excited, and laid her hand on his shoulder, intending to pacify him.

"For ony favour," said he nervously, "dinna come near me; abune a', dinna lay hands on me, or I'll no' answer for Burke."

When he turned round to ask again, "Wha said that?" the farmyard was empty, and the crowd flying pell-mell homewards—their speed not a little quickened by Watty's remark that "Burke was sure to break the chain, an' pity him that's hin'most."

"Dan," said Bell, "I've forgotten a box; ask Jenny Bennet"—Bell's worthy successor in Mrs. Barrie's kitchen—"to gie't. It's below the kitchen dresser, tied up in broon paper an' skeenie [twine], an' fetch't out wi' ye the morn."

Dan brought it next day, and was so considerately treated, that he actually took dinner in the kitchen, a thing he had seldom done anywhere. David convoyed him through the "close" as he was leaving, and the sow that had vexed him so much attracted Dan's notice.

"Ye'll be needin' me sune, Mr. Tait," said he, pointing to the sow; "that pig's ready for killin'."

"I canna bide it; I canna bear the sicht o't," said David. "I intended it for our ain use this winter, but since it ate the Corinthians, I wadna let a particle o't into ma mouth."

"Ate what?" said Dan.

"Ye may weel say what? It ate a' the Second Corinthians and fully the half o' the First."

Dan, supposing them to be some kind of new vegetable, said, as a kind of feeler, "But she wadna eat them a' at ance —baith the second an' the first?"

"But she did, the mair's the pity," said David; "an' it was on a Sabbath mornin' tae, the abominable craitur'."

Dan still more at a loss than before to make out what was meant, said inquiringly, "Some o' the first an' a' the second? She left some o' the first crap, did she, an' ye planted mair, or did they grow again? or was't some kind o' pushin [poison] or med'cine stuff that didna 'gree wi' her?"

"'Gree wi' her!" said David in amazement; "'gree wi' her! some sort o' medicine?—What d'ye mean? It was the Corinthians out o' the Bible."

"Out o' the Bible!" said Dan,—"out o' the Bible! I never kent that ony o' it was for eatin'."

"For eatin'?" repeated David,—"for eatin'! It was some o' the leaves o' the Bible, the bit that the Epistle to the Corinthians was printed on, that she ate, or tore out, ony way, an' made them useless."

"Was that a'?" said Dan.

"A'?—a'?—a'? Dan, was't no' plenty? It made me a' grue [shiver] to see her munchin' them. I couldna touch her; I canna even bring mysel' to sell her, for naebody that kent what the abominable craitur' did (and I couldna but tell) wad eat her either."

"What for no'?" said Dan; "she's neither ony the waur nor ony the better o't. If ye'll gi'e me a gude luckpenny, I'll sell her for you."

David was glad to get the animal out of his sight. Dan got a little profit by the transaction, and both were pleased.

Bell's "kirkin'" was a quiet affair. David and she started early, and were seated before many worshippers had entered the church. The second volume of Mr. Barrie's presentation Bible was carried thither by Bell in a clean white handkerchief and used for the day. In her other hand she had a few sprigs of balm and southernwood, which were moved backwards and forwards as a nosegay until they were withered, and limp, and double.

The couple dined at the manse. Bell looked vexed when Mrs. Barrie said, "You know the spare bedroom, Bell; put your bonnet and shawl off in it, and I daresay you will remember the way to the parlour."

"Mrs. Barrie," said Bell, "oh! dinna make a stranger o' me. Best bedroom!—me gang till the best bedroom? No, no, I'll gang to my auld room,"—which she did; and was heartily welcomed by Jenny, her successor, who proved to be a second, I dare not say an improved, edition of Bell.

Blackbrae soon bore evidences of Bell's presence. The window-panes were "glancin' clean," David said; "somehow the house was lichtsomer an' sweeter." A part of the "yard" before the front door was railed off and converted into a kitchen garden, and the Knowe Park family, especially Mary and Gordie, spent many happy afternoons at "Bell's."

Many others partook of and enjoyed the homely hospitality of Blackbrae. Dr. Stevenson, one of the hardest-wrought members of the hardest-wrought class of men in Scotland, our country surgeons, often took pot-luck there, and never had to ask for a "cinder," although at the same time he made very sparing use of Bell's bottle. She was always so well provided with many things, little in themselves, but invaluable to poor invalids, that he styled her his "Lady Bountiful," and found Bell not only ready and willing, but, as Mr. Barrie expressed it, "pre-eminently judeecious."

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

"Life's a weary journey alane,
Blithe's the road when we wend wi' ither;
Mutual gi'ein' is mutual gain,
Ae gude turn deserves anither."

James Ballantine.

AS my readers are more familiar with Mrs. Tait under her old name of Bell, it will be well to hold to it in what little we have to add to these "Bits;" because, although she filled her new station as effectively as the old one, it is more to wind up old matters than to enter upon new ones that she will now come before us.

Before the flitting from Knowe Park took place, Bell spent two or three busy days packing the things that specially required careful handling; for she was a walking inventory of all the house contained, and knew the history of every article in it. An interesting volume of choice "bits" could easily be made out of her remarks and stories about many of the odds-and-ends that cast up, for she not only told the incidents with which they were associated, but often gave a sketch of the life-history of those of whom they reminded her, while all the time she was busily packing.

Mary Barrie was Bell's chief assistant in the flitting, and learned during these few days more about her family history, and its connection with the folks about Blinkbonny, than she had during her former lifetime. Her mother's marriage dress brought out a long story; even her father's bachelor umbrella had its share of Bell's comments.

"Bachelor umbrella?" said Mary, as she put it up as a curiosity, "it is double the size of papa's present one—it

would make a family tent, and such a weight! The handle is like a friar's shaven crown, with a large bird's bill sticking out in front. And how thick the blue-black cotton is; and such queer bone tips on the strong whalebone ribs; just look what an elaborately embossed, sharp, tapering end it has! It must be three times the weight of our umbrellas now-a-days."

"The mair's the pity," said Bell; "that's the kind for stan'in' a' weathers. I often wonder that Mr. Barrie doesna use't yet."

"Fancy papa like this!" said Mary, as she took the massive article under her arm and stalked about the room.

"Fancy, or no' fancy," said Bell, "I see naething wrang wi't. It's just very purpose-like; it'll fend the weet [defend from rain] an' stand the blast better than the thin-shankit apologies o' things that's gaun noo, wi their stockin'-wire ribs an' muslin cleedin'. I mind o' carryin' it ae rainy day when Dr. Guthrie made up to me. He was glad to get into the beild o't, an' said, in his jokin' way, 'My good woman, that wad dae for the roof o' a preachin' tent.' But you young folk never saw the tent preachin's, there's nae sic thing noo-a-days, but I have been at them langsyne in Dumbarton,—one minster served the tables in the kirk, an' anither preached to the folk in the kirkyard round it. The tent was just like a sentry-box on stilts. I've kent the Sabbath-day's preachins gang on frae about ten o'clock in the mornin' till near ten o'clock at nicht."

In one room Mrs. Barrie looked towards a little drawer, and slightly nodded to Bell; she nodded feelingly in return, but no words passed between the two. Mrs. Barrie laid a small box on a chair and left the room; Bell opened the drawer and solemnly took out a little beaver bonnet, a very small fur tippet, a string of blue beads, a child's basket rattle, and a red-and-white wooden luggie [a small wooden tub used for porridge, with a handle formed by one stave being longer than any of the others],—which, when shaken, made some peas mysteriously concealed in the bottom of it rattle. It had been Nellie's porridge dish, and still contained a pair of little slippers, a small copy of Watts' hymns in scarlet binding, and some bits of broken china with gold on them—"Nellie's pennies.'

These and other memorials of "Bell's bairn" were solemnly taken out by Bell; who was hardly polite to Mary when doing this, but studiously turned her back upon her, and kept her from getting near the drawer. After the contents had been beautifully packed, Bell closed, wrapped, and roped the little box, saying, "I'll carry you mysel'. She'll never need to flit—she is hame *A'ways*."

Dan turned up early on the flitting morning to help David to load the carts which were to convey the furniture to Edinburgh; and between the intervals of helping to stow what was carried out, he had a talk with the horses, for he was in charge outside. Dan was fond of all kinds of animals; horses were second in his scale, now that he had given up game fowls.

"First and foremost," he used to say, "dougs, then horses, then goats," and so on. In his professional capacity as a rude veterinary surgeon, he knew the Blackbrae teams well, and as the first cart was to be driven by David himself (and Bell *would* travel by it although urged to take the railway, which had lately been opened about four miles from Blinkbonny, and to which a post-chaise was to take the Barrie family), and old "Rosie" was to lead the van. With the exception of a spot on her forehead and a "white stocking on her far leg," Rosie was a coal-black, thick-set, quick-stepping, trusty mare, a great favourite of Dan's, and she seemed to know this, for while he had a great deal to say, she had abundance of leisure to listen to, and seemed to enjoy the chat.

"Well, Rosie, my dawtie [darling]," said he, at the same time patting her nose, and kindly pulling her ears, "ye wad need tae be in gude fettle [trim] the day. Ye've a far road afore ye; but there's nane fitter for't. Ye'll no' reist [stubbornly stick] on the lang dreich [tiresome] Cadger's Brae, nor on the Ramsune [ram's horn] Hill; for altho' it's no' sae lang as the Cadger's Brae, it's a nasty strauchty-squinty [zig-zag] bit, wi' terrible snell snabs [steep parts] that tak's the wind mair frae a beast than a lang steady pu'. I ken ye o' the auld, Rosie; ye'll scart [scratch] yer way up, diggin' yer shoon [shoes] intae the road till the fire's fleein' frae them, an' bennin' yer fore-legs wi' a' yer pith, and strauchtin' them back again wi' a nick like the spring o' a gardener's knife. You for a steady day's wark, Rosie; you're no' ane o' the breengein',

flingin' [rashly running, kicking] kind, Rosie; ye just snoove [move steadiiy] awa', like linseed out o' a pock—on an' on—steady, steady"—and much to the same effect.

As the journey was a long one, Rosie started with her load at a very early hour. When all was ready, Bell, having to mount to some mattresses which had been put uppermost for her comfort on the journey, handed Nellie's box to Dan, saying:

"Eh, Dan, Wee Nellie's things are in that box. I'll carry't on my lap a' the way. D'ye ken, Dan, that your dream has hardly ever been out o' my head since I packit them? I aye think I see her in her braw mansion, lookin' doon on the confushun and upturn o' the flittin'. Nae flittin,' or confushun, or sorrow, or pain for her noo. No! no! We maun a' try to get up beside her, Dan, when our time comes."

"It's worth tryin'," said Dan; "'deed is't," as Rosie, led by David, with Bell as a deck cargo, scarcely visible in the dark morning, started for Edinburgh. The old mare's long swinging step served to keep David warm, but it set Bell asleep. Luckily she was well wrapped up, and nothing the worse for the journey.

As Rosie's cart went out, Sandie Ramage, David's head ploughman, led in the next cart, drawn by "Charlie Gray," another of the Blackbrae horses. Dan had a good deal to say to "Charlie" also, but Bell's remark about Nellie's mansion had changed the current of his thoughts, and he spoke more to Charlie about this matter than about the journey to Edinburgh.

"We'll need to try as your mistress said, Charlie," began Dan, after exchanging civilities with the horse, "an' wi' the like o' her I get on no' that ill; but it disna set the like o' me, for ye ken, Charlie, I've been a wild throughither kind o' a man, to mak' ony show-off or palaver about thae things; an' forbye, what mak's some folks sae keen tae speir into a' the oots an' ins o' that kind o' thing at the like o' me? It's my business, an' nae ither body's. It's ill kennin' some folk, an' there's nae satisfyin' ithers; and d'ye no' think, Charlie, that maybe the very best o' mankind may hae enough adae wi' themsel's? Mr. Walker says that, onyway, and he's a man I can speak after. We've ha'en mony a crack, an' I've aye been the better o't; he's so hamely an' kind-like,

an' yet he's very firm tae. He tak's pains tae mak' things plain, an' he doesna miss ye if ye're in a faut; he grups ye gey sharp, and gars [makes] you a' shiver if ye've been misbehavin'."

Finding Charlie a patient listener, Dan went on, for he had leisure and opportunity; but it would be tedious to record all he said. One bit was spoken rather louder than the rest, and reported to me as follows:

"I'm willin' to hear o' thae things in the kirk, or when there's a wheen [number] thegither speakin' about them; but I tak' very ill wi' the like o' Miss Park speirin' [inquiring] at me if I've fand this, or am sure o' that; an' after gaun ower about a dizzen or mair o' lang-nebbit dictionar' words, she tell'd me if I couldna say I had them an' ither 'evidences,' as she ca'd them, I was deid, an' something else, I didna pick up.—An' what business had she to say that nae gude man could keep a big ugly doug—meanin' my Burke? He's a hantle better-lookin' than her, wi' her wizened leathery chafts [jaws]. I've never letten him fecht, nor have I gane to see either cock-fechts or doug-fechts, since I saw the pictures in the manse. Burke an' me's ower auld friends to pairt noo; in fac', Charlie, I've learned mair frae him than frae Miss Park. I whiles dae up her bit garden, an' she speaks sae saucy an' disdainfu'-like at me, as if I was some nasty mongrel. She minds me o' the doctors at Greenock lang syne, that used to boord the ships, if there was onybody no' weel in them. They were the sharp blades. They never even offert to gang near the puir sailors to cure them, or help them onyway; it was just, 'Bad case—off to hospital—off too—off,' an' sic like. Nae doubt she means to make me better, but yon's no' the way! It's like what Burke used to do amang the sheep when I was gi'ein' him a walk lang syne; it was a kind o' vexin' sicht, for Burke wasna *exactly* like a collie amang them."

After all the carts were laden, Dan waited to accompany the last one a few miles on the road. Mrs. Barrie called him in, and said:

"Now, Dan, I am not going to pay you in money for this morning's work."

"Pay me!" said Dan; "pay *me* in money, Mrs. Barrie!

Ye surely ken better than to vex me by offerin' to do that. I couldna look Burke in the face if I took a farden [farthing]. He wad be that affrontit at me that he wadna gi'e me house-room."

"I never thought of offering you money, Dan," replied Mrs. Barrie. "I am quite pleased to accept of your help as a friend of the family; but to keep you from forgetting us altogether"—

"That's what I'll never, never dae, mem," said Dan very firmly.

Mrs. Barrie showed that she was pleased, and said in even a homelier tone than before: "To keep you in mind of us all, Dan, I ask you to accept this picture, and to hang it in your house; it is your old friend, 'The Angel's Whisper.'"

The picture was the only thing left in the dining-room wall, and only its rough brown paper back was visible until Mrs. Barrie turned it round. Dan started, applied first the cuff of his coat, then his rough woollen cap, to his eyes; and, as he afterwards told Bell, "I fand out where my heart lay soon eneuch; it flappert about like a fresh-run sea-troot wi' a hook in its mooth. I was that gliffed [taken by surprise] that I couldna say even Thank ye." Mrs. Barrie had great difficulty in getting him to accept the picture.

"Take that?" said he excitedly—"that frae you! that's the brawest thing in a' your hoose. That's no' like ma house at a'. It's far ower splendid—it's just awfu' bonnie; that's a pictur' an' no mistake;" and he kept gazing upon it wistfully and solemnly.

Mrs. Barrie would take no denial. She insisted upon his taking it home at once; and, shaking his hand warmly, she said: "Good-bye, Dan; I cannot thank you enough for all your kindness. Be sure, if ever you are in Edinburgh, to come to see us."

As she left the room Dan's eye followed her with a peculiar expression, compounded of reverence, gratitude, admiration, and—what shall I call it?—knowingness or penetration? I leave my readers to supply the word. And he said to himself:

"Me come to see you—*me?* That wad be a farce. I think the offishers [police] wad keep a gey sharp look-out for

some nichts after they saw me hangin' about ony house." Here he was interrupted by Sandie Ramage saying, "I'll licht my pipe, an' then we'll start."

Dan quickly crossed the field with his precious picture, taking great care to keep the top of the picture uppermost, so as not to shake it. Sandie Ramage affirms that he heard him say, "If I'm no' carefu' I micht wauken the bonnie bairn." After he got it home, and safely deposited, still top uppermost, inside of his "box" bed, he placed the only two chairs he possessed in front as guardians, locked the door, and convoyed Charlie Gray until he had mastered the "Ramsune Hill," assisted by Dan at the back of the cart when going round the zig-zag turns. Dan would have gone farther, but he was wearying to have a long look at "The Angel's Whisper." On his way homeward he met the post-chaise containing Mrs Barrie and the children. Gordie, who sat beside the driver, cried to those inside, "Here's Dan coming!" As they passed him, all waved a kind good-bye, and poor Dan stood, cap in hand, looking at the receding vehicle, until Gordie, at a part of the road where the last look of Blinkbonny was to be had, turned round and waved his cap. Dan did the same, and said smiling, yet with tears trickling down his cheeks, "Ye're an awfu' ane! He's a stuffy laddie that,—he'll no' let grass grow at his heels. But they're a' gude thegither, an' they hae been gude to me. My blessing may not be muckle worth, but they hae it frae the very bottom o' my heart, —God bless them a' and aye!"

When Dan reached his cottage he found Mr. Walker standing outside. He had been in London at the great Exhibition of 1851, and received from a publisher, an old Blinkbonny man, for distribution in the parish and neighbourhood, several copies of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, one of which he gave to Dan, who was so proud of his new picture that he asked Mr. Walker in to see it. Mr. Walker, after expressing his pleasure at Dan's "Art Treasure," explained to him some of the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which greatly interested him. A neighbour's son occasionally came in and read and further explained it to him, greatly to Dan's delight. Had I space to give his comments, they would astonish even very learned men; but I must bid

farewell to Dan, and am glad to leave him such a quiet neighbourly man, that, when an impertinent fellow called "Braidnebs" after him, Dan quietly turned round, looked at him, and said:

"If I was as stupid as I hae been, I wad hae made a fule o' mysel' the noo; an' ye're trying to mak' a fule o' me, but ye'll find out that ye're jist makin' a fule o' yersel'. The game's here yet, but it disna show up at a conceited, barn-door, mongrel bantin' that kens nae better. Man, I'm sorry for ye."

The family and the helpers and the flitting reached Edinburgh in good time and condition. It was Bell's first visit to the metropolis of Scotland, and she was greatly taken with the Castle. "It was bigger and had mair houses on it than Dumbarton Castle; but there was one thing it hadna, an' that was the bonnie Clyde round about it." When she arrived at the new home she set to work at once, William Morrison, the singing deacon formerly mentioned, who had charge of the flitting, having come off with the early train.

"Weel, Willie, is the house a' ready? Are a' the lums soopit [chimneys swept]? It's a bit nice-like house. Has May Ritchie gotten't a' cleaned?"

Here May, Guy's daughter, appeared to answer for herself.

"Yes, Mrs. Tait; every corner is as clean as a new preen" [pin].

When Bell was inside, she evidently had not the high estimate of the cleanness of the house that May had.

"Let's see," said she as she sniffed about. "May! it's hardly just that; it's a wee like the 'Willie Cossar' [an old name for a large-sized pin] that Dan Corbett used to ripe his pipe wi', an' it was very dim,—yellow, green, an' a' colours. But I'll gi'e you a bit hand, an' we'll sune make a' thing nice,—the feck [most] of the mess is out, onyway." Bell soon put right the corners that needed attention.

Mrs. Barrie pressed David and Bell to stay over Sabbath, and to be present at the introduction of Mr. Barrie to his new charge, but Bell did not favourably respond to the kind invitation. Although the call had helped forward her marriage, it had parted her from her best friends; and she told David, that "altho' there was naebody

she likit sae weel to hear as Mr. Barrie, she wad *Wishart Kirk nane.*"

After getting things "a wee snod" in the Edinburgh house, she fulfilled her early promise to David to put everything right for Blackbrae by making many sensible purchases. Not even an Edinburgh shopkeeper could induce Bell to buy, hardly even to look at, anything she did not think necessary;—having matured her inventory of wants, she held to it, and intuitively discovered she was wrong when she chanced to get into a "Cheap John" shop, as she called it. When outside, she said to David:

"It's hard for a greedy eye to hae a leal heart: we'll hae nae trash in our house—a's no' gold that glitters." The result of her shopping was: "I dinna ken whether M'Laren's or Lauther's is the best shop, but there's this much about them baith, they hae gude things; an' if a body is willing to pay for them, ye'll get the very best, an' it's aye the cheapest."

Bell and David resolved to furnish one or two rooms, so that they could invite old friends such as the Barries to stay with them. "She thocht they micht like to come out, an' she wad be as glad to see them, specially Gordie; but, 'deed, ony o' them a'." Sandie Ramage got the purchases gathered together, and, after bidding good-bye to Mrs. Barrie's household, David and Bell "drove the day into the night," and landed safely at Blackbrae.

Mr. and Mrs. Tait were "as happy as the day was lang," Bell doing her part as faithfully as she had done in Mrs. Barrie's service, but with even, if possible, more pawkiness [shrewdness]. She carried on her experiments with the hens,—indeed, with all the live stock,—until, to them, "her very foot had music in't" as she moved among them. David and she had as happy a fireside as could be found in broad Scotland; and, for miles round, the best recommendation which a servant could have was, that when she was a lassie she had served a year or two at Blackbrae.

Many acts of considerate kindness on the part of the mistress at Blackbrae are told by the poor and needy; for Bell's heart expanded as her power of doing good increased. She had little romantic poetry in her nature; her favourite book in that line was an admirable collection of nursery songs which first appeared as an appendix to a

book called "Whistlebinkie," unhappily now very scarce.[1] Bell possessed "Songs for the Nursery" bound separately, and many a night did she entertain the Barrie bairns with its admirable contents: "Willie Winkie," "Cockie-Leerie-La," "John Frost," "The A B C," "Uncle Jamie," "Currook-i-ty-doo," etc.; but she always ended with "The Blind Beggar Man," and to this day she carries out the Christlike sentiments embodied in the following lines:

"To the feckless and friendless, my bairns, aye be kind;
Be feet to the lame, and be eyes to the blind;
'Twas to share wi' the needfu' our blessings were gi'en,
And the friend o' the poor never wanted a frien'.

"He who tempers the wind to the lamb that is shorn,
Will bless those who take from life's pathway a thorn;
And the 'cup of cold water' that kindness bestows,
On the heart back in rivers of gladness o'erflows.

"Oh, tent you the lear' frae your mither ye learn,
For the seed springs in manhood that's sawn in the bairn;
And mind it will cheer you through life's little span,
The blessing that fa's frae the blind beggar man."

Before putting these "Bits from Blinkbonny" into the hands of the public, I asked Andrew Taylor, my old friend the precentor already referred to, to look over them; for old Mr. Taylor, and worthy Mr. Morrison the minister, and Miss Park, and many of those mentioned in the "Bits," have passed away.

His criticism was: "Well, I've read your 'Bits,' an' they're no' bad, considerin'. Ye've said rather much about the Free Kirk an' Bell; for although she's a nice body, she was just like oursel's, an' no' the kind to make a book about. An' then Dan was a queer character to mix up wi' ministers and elders and Dorcas societies. It's a' true enough so far. I mind o' the braidnebs an' the dream, an' David himsel' tell'd me about the sow an' the Corinthians. The whole concern brings me in mind o' a firescreen my daughter won at a bazaar; it is covered wi' pictures o' a' sorts and sizes, wi' scenes out o' every country

[1] This admirable collection of Scottish songs, rhymes, and poems, has been recently re-issued, and the new edition is enriched by many selections from modern and famous song writers; but the "Bairns'" portion has not yet been published separately. More's the pity!

under the sun, an' at a' times o' the year, simmer an' winter; there's butterflies bigger than folk, an' oranges and peaches, and even shells, growin' on ivy leaves. In fact, it minds me o' a story in Dean Ramsay's book about a Scotchman when he was askit by an Englishman if he ca'd a sheep's head a dish? 'I dinna ken,' said Sawnie, 'but there's a lot o' gude confused eatin' about it, onyway.'"

I told him that I admitted the "Bits" were more of a hash than a joint, a sort of literary haggis, but it was difficult to give a fair notion of village life without bringing in individuals and scenes of all kinds.

"That's exactly what I'm sayin'," said Andrew. "There's the ither kirks, as gude as the Free, that ye've said little about; an' then there's our tradesmen,—there were some queer fish among them in my young days; an' there's the schule, an' the doctor, an' plenty mair. Could ye no' hae said something about the generality o' the auld folk o' Blinkbonny? If ye tak' as lang to them as ye've taen to Bell, ye may make fifty books."

I acknowledged the correctness of his remarks, and advised him to try authorship himself, and he would likely find it more difficult than he imagined.

"Me write a book?" said he; "I've mair sense. You'll find that you're sure to hae trampit on somebody's tender corns."

"Very likely," said I; "if so, it has been done unintentionally on my part. I had no plan before me when I started, nor have I, while trying to reproduce bygone times, had any other object in view than to present them in a friendly spirit and in a homely garb."

I hope my readers will receive in the same spirit these "Bits from Blinkbonny."

Annot and her Pupil.
The Cousins Reconciled.
Tales of my Sunday Scholars.
Little Alfred. | Eaton Parsonage.
The Lycee Boys. | The Race for Gold.
The Goldsmith's Widow.
The Martyr Shepherd.
Mr Leslie's Stories.
Hester Glen's Holidays.
Jem the Tinker and his Children.
Four Years in a Cave.
Until the Shadows Flee Away.
Marian Temple's Work.
Ned's Motto. | A Little Leaven.
Crossing the Line. | Ocean Venture.
Bertie Lee. | Beacon Lights.
Drifting and Steering.
The Gate of Pearl.
Little Effie's Home.
The Wonderful Pocket.
The Magic Shoes.
The Magic Spectacles.
Aunt Mabel's Prayer.
The Exiles of France.
The Power of Gold.
Mrs Gibbon's Parlour Maid.
Doctor Dunbar, and Elsie's Trial.
Ivan Papof.
Pollok's Tales of the Covenanters.
The Exiled Family and their Restorers.
The Pilgrim's Progress.
Father Clement. | Anna Ross.
Anna Lee. | Jock Halliday.
Katie, an Edinburgh Lassie.
Tom Telfer's Shadow.
Ben Hanson.
By Still Waters.
A Door of Hope.
Memoir of Rev. Robert Murray M'Cheyne.
Letters to a Daughter.
Gordonhaven.

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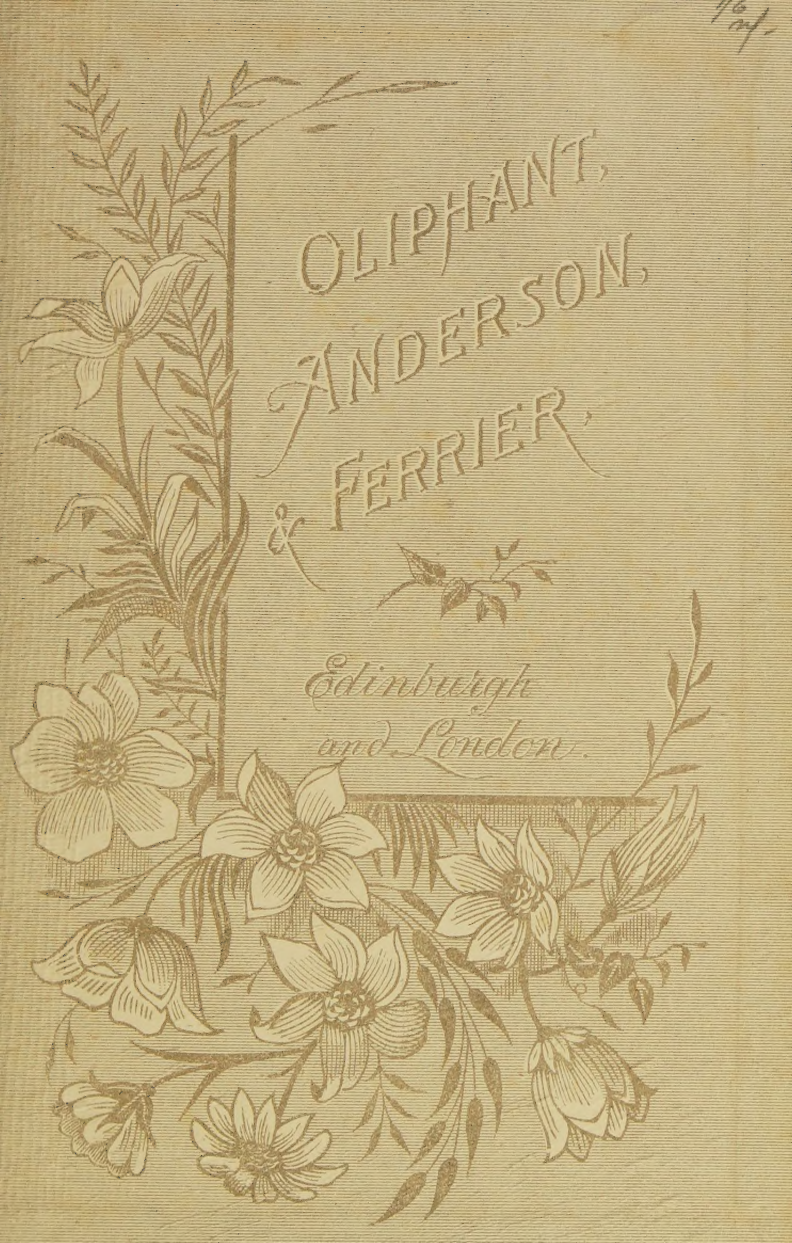

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